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EDITORIAL

RIGHT TURN IN ISRAEL

The irony of the right-wing gains in the Israeli elections is that they come at a time when conditions for the creation of an Israeli-Palestinian peace had never seemed riper. It now looks as if the Likud Party will form a governing coalition with two smaller blocs of religious and far-right hyper-nationalist parties—which were helped by the cynical banning of Meir Kahane's Kach Party two weeks before the November 1 balloting. Ariel Sharon will probably not be elevated to Defense Minister right away (Moshe Arens has more favor in Washington). But Sharonist repression—on a scale far worse than Yitzhak Rabin's "iron fist" policies—will be inflicted on the Palestinian *intifada*. The institution of the death penalty, expansion of settlements, mass expulsions—these are but a few measures on the Likud agenda. There is always the possibility, of course, that a right-wing government will feel secure enough to work toward a historic compromise, as de Gaulle did in Algeria and Nixon did in China. But how much suffering must be endured first? Ask the Algerians or the Vietnamese.

Perhaps now that the fig leaf of "national unity" has been torn away, international protest will at last begin to build. Even if the mainstream media continue to look the other way, accurate information about the crisis in the occupied territories is available in abundance, as Alexander Cockburn points out on page 520. The Palestine National Council will soon meet in Algiers and issue, we hope, a clear call for coexistence and a two-state solution. Bridging the gap between Israel and the P.L.O. must be an urgent priority for the next U.S. Administration. For that to happen, Jews and Arabs alike—especially in the United States—must become serious peace activists, prepared to stand together and campaign hard for a just and secure settlement.

IGNORING THE INTIFADA
Alexander Cockburn

POSTWAR IRAN
Mansour Farhang

SOVIET CINEMA
Karen Rosenberg

BLACK MONDAY
Doug Henwood

'GROUND ZERO'
Brendan Lemon

'THE THIN BLUE LINE'
Fredric Paul Smoler

A WHALE OF A SHOW

THE DUKAKIS-BUSH-TYSON-GIVENS FIGHT

RICHARD LINGEMAN

Surely this was the most television-driven presidential campaign in history, a clash of symbols rather than ideas. Never before have so few mendacious television spots tried to sway so many.

The ultimate (planned) irony was the showing, a week before the election, of a television melodrama about an amoral vice-presidential candidate who looks good on the tube. The Republicans, who protested NBC house ads linking it to today's headlines, realized that *Favorite Son* threatened to be as symbolically potent an indictment of Dan Quayle as their Willie Horton commercials were of Mike Dukakis, though equally fictional.

But the real ratings winner had to be the Tyson-Givens soap opera, which engaged people more viscerally than any of the candidates. The Robin-Mike bout was a paradigm of the ultimate negative presidential campaign: symbols plus a story line. It dramatized the great issues of power, money, sex *and* sexism, corruption and personality as the real-life political scenario never could. Herewith a round-by-round analysis:

ROUND 1: Tyson out fast at the bell. Marries TV series actress and buys $4.2 million mansion in New Jersey hunt country. Robin is privileged, smart, Sarah Lawrence grad, headed for Harvard Med School. But signed with William Morris and went to the *Head of the Class* instead. (Show's about class of brainy kids; she's the moody one.) Her mom, Ruth Roper, runs $2 million-a-year computer consulting biz; once had affair with Yankee out-

(*Continued on Page 532*)

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LETTERS.

HIGH-SECURITY ANXIETY

Washington

I am writing in response to an editorial that appeared in your publication regarding a recent U.S. District Court decision in *Baraldini et al. v. Meese* ["Follow-Up," Aug. 27/Sept. 3]. This decision relates to Federal Bureau of Prisons operations in the former High Security Unit for female offenders at the Federal Correctional Institution in Lexington, Kentucky. The editorial failed to relate a number of important facts about the unit, as well as the court's findings on unit operations.

This civil complaint was brought by the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of several inmates who at that time were housed in the Lexington High Security Unit. It alleged unconstitutional conditions of confinement under the Eighth Amendment, as well as Fifth Amendment violations arising from a lack of due process transfer procedures to the unit, and claims of First Amendment violations of the inmates' right to free speech and political association.

The judge found that there were no violations as to the Eighth and Fifth Amendment claims, but ruled against the government on the First Amendment complaint. The Bureau of Prisons was ordered to place two of the plaintiffs, whose rights were found to have been violated, in the general population of an institution. One of these plaintiffs had been removed from the unit prior to this decision to stand trial in another criminal matter; the other was transferred to the Federal Medical Center in Rochester, Minnesota, for previously scheduled medical care. The government is appealing the decision.

The judge found no fault with the Bureau of Prisons' procedures for transferring inmates to this unit, ruling in full accord with the substantial case law on that point. He also found that the conditions of confinement in the unit did not violate the Constitution, in sharp contrast to the provocative claims of the plaintiffs and their counsel. While the decision contains cautionary language on several related points, I believe it is vital that the public know that the decision largely affirmed the bureau's policy and operating procedures.

The adverse portion of the judge's decision was a narrow finding that the Bureau of Prisons made a determination to hold these plaintiffs in the Lexington unit for their political beliefs. The government made a record to the contrary, and I want to clearly state this very important fact: The Bureau of Prisons has never considered an inmate's political beliefs as a factor in any classification or transfer decision.

The court's decision evidently reflects the government's inability to communicate a subtlety that is crucial to the classification and transfer decisions in this case—the tension between permissible political and free speech activity, and behaviors that inarguably present grave risks to a free society and conflict with the laws of that society. The inmates involved are indisputably associated with groups that advocate certain political doctrines. However, in a point that is critically important to correctional management of cases such as this, these groups also advocate violence and assisting imprisoned adherents of those groups in escape. In our view, the political beliefs involved are immaterial to the evaluation of the degree of escape risk presented. The government has an inescapable duty to act upon reasonably derived inferences to prevent criminal activity, in this case, escape from custody. Not to take these reasonable precautions would be an abdication of our duty, and would create a grave risk to our staff and the public.

An analogy may be found in the continued long-term, high-security confinement of inmates who have attempted to engineer helicopter escapes with the help of outside confederates, or of major drug offenders whose vast financial resources present them with the opportunity to corrupt staff or orchestrate a sophisticated escape with outside assistance. Those individuals may not themselves have been involved in an actual escape. Their individual security classification score may not indicate, in isolation, the need for high-security confinement. They may have even, at some point in their sentence, have been confined in an institution of lesser security. However, we still take prudent security precautions to prevent their escape by holding them in high-security settings.

Unfortunately, the court in *Baraldini* was not persuaded by these same reasonable inferences about the potential for escape by members of organizations who have advocated, or in some cases actually carried out, just that kind of activity. Hopefully, our appeal of this decision will clarify these issues. Even so, the women previously housed in the unit have been transferred, and it is not presently in use.

I hope this information will be useful to your readers in understanding the complexity of the questions that this case presents, and the fact that the court's decision notwithstanding, the Bureau of Prisons does not use political affiliations or beliefs as a reason for transferring inmates. *J. Michael Quinlan*
Director, Federal Bureau of Prisons

THE EDITORS REPLY

In a sense, it's true that our editorial on the closing of the Female High Security Unit in Lexington "failed to relate a number of important facts" about both the H.S.U. and the court's findings. Unfortunately, our biweekly summer publishing schedule limits the space we are able to allocate to many important stories. But our reading of the several-thousand-page trial record and of Judge Barrington Parker's forty-page decision makes it quite impossible for us to agree with anything else in the letter from the director of the Bureau of Prisons. Most misleading is that the director's letter completely obfuscates the issues that were adjudicated in this three-day trial. Although the prisoners argued that their transfer to and incarceration in the forbidding Lexington H.S.U. [see William A. Reuben and Carlos Norman, "The Women of Lexington Prison," June 27, 1987] was a violation of their rights under the First, Fifth and Eighth Amendments, the relief they sought, as expressed in their lawyers' motion papers, was "an order from this Court closing the unit, and enjoining defendants [then–Attorney General Edwin Meese 3d and Bureau of Prisons director Quinlan] from making unit assignments and continuing them on the basis of political affiliations, contacts and ideology. They also seek an order . . . requiring defendants to integrate them into the general populations of a facility housing women."

Everything that the women sought—impossible to ascertain from J. Michael Quinlan's letter—was achieved by their lawsuit: The Lexington H.S.U. has been closed down; the court held that the women had been transferred to the H.S.U. because of their politics; and the judge ordered the Bureau of Prisons to transfer them to the general prison population.

As for omitted "important facts," we are pleased to add this passage from Judge Parker's opinion, which was, due to space considerations, not included in our brief editorial:

> The High Security Unit assignment criteria are so vague that the line is blurred between those inmates chosen for the Unit and those who remain in the general prison population. These criteria assume that any prisoner with an undefined relationship to an unspecified political group having an ideology adverse to the United States government and undertaking actions based on that ideology is a candidate for assignment to the HSU. . . . [Silvia] Baraldini and [co-plaintiff Susan] Rosenberg have been singled out for advocating ideas disagreeable to the government. The Female High Security Unit is an exaggerated response to the defendants' penological concerns.
>
> . . .
>
> It is one thing to place persons under greater security because they have escape histories and pose special risks to our correctional institutions. But consigning anyone to a high security unit for past political associations they will never shed unless forced to renounce them is a dangerous mission for this country's prison system.

The Editors

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EDITORIALS.

Bitter Pill

This year's presidential campaign offered an unusually clear contrast on the issue of abortion. Michael Dukakis defended women's right to choose, while George Bush insisted on government's right to force women to carry pregnancies to term. The candidates' views on abortion have an immediate bearing on law, through their likely appointments to a Supreme Court that may be poised to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. But the abortion debate also affects the functioning of the marketplace and the pace of scientific research.

A compelling example is the drama recently played out in Paris. On October 26, a French pharmaceutical company, Groupe Roussel Uclaf, announced that it would no longer distribute RU 486, a drug capable of ending most early pregnancies. The firm, controlled by the West German giant Hoechst A.G., had caved in to pressure from antiabortion groups, especially those in the United States. The next day, a fierce counteropposition formed among physicians and family planners attending the World Congress of Gynecology and Obstetrics, which just happened to be meeting in Rio de Janeiro at the time. On October 28, the French Minister of Health ordered the company to resume distribution of RU 486 "in the interest of public health."

The drug is an antiprogesterone steroid that makes the uterine wall inhospitable to a fertilized egg, which is then

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discharged. Taken within forty-nine days of a menstrual period, it works 85 percent of the time; in combination with another drug, prostaglandin, it is even more effective. For women in developed countries, RU 486 does away with the physical and emotional pain of surgical abortion; if she takes the drug soon after a missed period, a woman will never know whether she was pregnant. For women without access to safe medical facilities, the benefits are even greater. RU 486 could eliminate the more than 200,000 women's deaths from botched abortions around the world each year. Authorities in France and China have certified the drug as safe.

The drug could also deal a severe blow to the antiabortion movement. There would be no more vulnerable women to harass at clinic doors, no more pornography of tiny fingers and toes. With the introduction of RU 486, says Richard Glasgow, education director for the National Right to Life Committee, "We'd lose some of our best arguments." In effect, RU 486 privatizes the act of ending a pregnancy.

But if right-to-lifers cannot picket every gynecologist and every drugstore, they can target the companies that manufacture RU 486. It was such a threat that led to Roussel's withdrawal from the market and its re-entry under government protection. American pharmaceutical companies, which make a wide variety of products, are especially susceptible to boycotts by well-organized groups like the right-to-life movement.

To bring RU 486 to the United States, a drug manufacturer would have to pay millions of dollars for extensive testing to secure approval from the Food and Drug Administration, and the government money that often subsidizes such trials is not available for an abortifacient. The company would also have to set aside money to defend itself against possible liability suits. Thus, only companies large enough to assume these expenses and ignore the losses caused by a boycott—or one small enough to have little to lose—could consider marketing the drug in this country. To date, no one has expressed interest.

RU 486 will now be available to women in France and China, but their American sisters may have to wait for some time. Poll after poll shows that the majority of Americans support women's right to choose abortion, but antiabortionists continue to impede the exercise of that right. In this climate, American drug companies are especially sensitive to the threats of a disciplined minority, and there is no Minister of Health to remind them of the public interest. Pro-choice Americans must learn from AIDS activists like the members of ACT-UP how to pressure pharmaceutical companies and the F.D.A. If we don't do it, no one will.

Raising Roofs

We live in a country without a housing policy. No doubt that is because integrated housing remains the most intractable, and the most important, element in putting blacks and other minorities on an equal footing with whites. Living together turns out to be a lot more threatening and a lot more crucial than eating together, traveling together or even going to school together. Like abortion, housing the poor next door is one of those issues that frighten politicians into a craven silence. And like abortion, the absence of a policy leaves us depending on the slender reed of the courts.

During the past decade a handful of courageous judges have ruled in favor of putting integrated, government-assisted housing in the previously white neighborhoods of Yonkers and Huntington, New York, and Mount Laurel, New Jersey. Their decisions should eventually apply to suburbs, towns and cities across the country where the poor, especially the black and Latino poor, have been kept out, intentionally (as in Yonkers) or unintentionally (as in Huntington and Mount Laurel). Now and then the lawsuits and rulings affecting these three communities occupy our attention, but these battles often seem pallid beside the dramatic assaults on segregation that made hearts fierce two decades ago. And yet they are probably more significant.

The trouble is that apart from judges like Leonard Sand, who ruled on the Yonkers case, few public figures still seem to worry about whether we are going to be one society or two. Neither Mario Cuomo, the endlessly moralizing Governor of New York, nor the state's two high-profile U.S. Senators—Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the florid expert on race and the melting pot, and Alfonse D'Amato, the watchdog of potholes and champion of the white working class—cared to intervene when the issue arose in Yonkers. Nor did any other state official, which left matters in the hands of a 29-year-old Mayor and a City Council pledged to obstruct justice.

Despite eight years of harassment, betrayals, delays and falsifications by Yonkers officials run amok, Sand has insisted on a housing plan designed not to threaten the existing neighborhoods of the city. There will be no isolated projects or high-rise ghettos with their inevitable spill of poverty and crime. Instead, the plan calls for low-density housing of both government-assisted and middle-income units built to look as much as possible like the existing housing stock. The idea is to scatter these townhouses across several communities and provide their inhabitants with whatever social services—day care, job counseling, etc.—they may need. According to architect and urban planner Oscar Newman (author of *Defensible Space* and *Community of Interest*), who has tried to advise the city during this stormy period, such low-density, scatter-site housing does not depress real estate values or introduce class or racial tension; it has worked well in Boston and Philadelphia, in Louisville and Charlottesville. It looks as if it could work in Mount Laurel, Huntington and even in Yonkers. But not without some help from the rest of us.

Thirteen years of delays in implementing the Mount Laurel decision tell us that the good intentions of judges can always be evaded; the likelihood that *Roe v. Wade* will be overturned during a Bush Administration reminds us that we can't depend on the judiciary to draw up our social policy. What we can do is continue along the path Judge Sand has described—by collectively affirming our commit-

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ment to a single society. This means legislating low income housing not only for working-class communities like Yonkers but for places like Pound Ridge, New York, where Judge Sand has his country house, and alongside the condos and co-ops of leftish liberals everywhere. That we haven't done this indicates the scope of the problem, but if we don't do it we had better not condescend to the recalcitrant councilmen of Yonkers.

ELIZABETH POCHODA

Invisible Man

Fifty years from now, when social historians look back on the 1988 elections, an obscure campaign commercial from Maryland may tell a great deal about political advertising in the United States. For the grosser tactics of the Bush-Quayle team—the racist code word here, the inflammatory face of Willie Horton there—do not fully convey the true quality of Republican propaganda, which is both subtler and more unified than many may have noticed. In Maryland, Alan Keyes has been waging an uphill struggle for a seat in the U.S. Senate, and Ronald Reagan has been trying to help him. Two weeks before Election Day, Reagan stopped in Baltimore just to work a pricey roomful of Republicans on Keyes's behalf; and the President has also taped a rather striking pro-Keyes commercial, which seems to air on all local channels every fifteen minutes.

What makes the ad striking is the candidate's complete absence from it. Instead of Keyes, President Reagan, rouged and twinkly eyed as ever, appears in a medium close-up and delivers a brief "personal testimonial" marked by the usual laid-back pseudopopulism: "I'm from California, but if I were from Maryland, I'd vote for Alan Keyes for the United States Senate." After this brief presidential spiel, there appears only a card, and a voice-over tersely repeats the candidate's name and the office sought.

Why this meticulous avoidance of the candidate's own face? His face, which has been reproduced on billboards and public conveyances throughout the state, is by no means an ugly one; indeed, it is at least as appealing as the President's. That face, however, does clearly publicize the fact that Alan Keyes is black—which surely explains why Keyes, in his own commercials, does not appear beside, before or after Ronald Reagan.

Keyes's nonappearance tells us something about the Republicans, and it tells us something, too, about the needs of propaganda. In speaking to the angry, straitened animal within each one of us, propaganda must speak not just fiercely but repeatedly; repeatedly and simply. Never can the message seem in any way self-contradictory or ambivalent, or else the animal becomes confused and won't obey it. To send a mixed signal, then, could be even more damaging to one's message than would a clear rebuttal from the other side.

Through both its national and local commercials, the Bush campaign (as Leslie Savan noted in *The Village Voice*) has managed to associate the Democrats with filth, both actual and metaphoric—the heavily fouled waters of "Dukakis's Boston Harbor," the multiracial line of "hardened criminals" streaming in and out of "Dukakis's furlough program," the funky, bug-eyed head of black rapist Willie Horton. Against these atavistic images, whose impact has been bolstered daily by sly racist innuendoes and the scatological punning on Dukakis's name, "Bush-Quayle" has taken on the same transcendent air of gleaming purity that surrounds any other product sold on television. Thus it is not simply fear to which the Bush commercials have appealed but an even deeper reaction—a morbid squeamishness, a phobic revulsion, referring all at once to floating garbage, felons, blacks, black felons, Democrats.

Like all propaganda, this primal strategy requires absolute consistency; and so the face of Alan Keyes, while all right by itself on the back of a bus, can never be juxtaposed with Ronald Reagan's face—not even if "the President wants to encourage black leadership in the Republican Party," as White House press spokesman Marlin Fitzwater put it to reporters at the Keyes fund-raiser. George Bush too, for that matter, may be personally tolerant, but the Bush-Quayle propaganda calls, in its own disquieting way, for total segregation.

MARK CRISPIN MILLER

Mark Crispin Miller teaches in the writing seminars at Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of Boxed In: The Culture of TV *(Northwestern University Press).*

Nut 'n' But

Say what you like about the U.S. election campaign, at least George Bush and Michael Dukakis did not sink to using talking squirrels to harvest the black vote. P.W. Botha did. Two rodents named Nut and But were the stars of a $2 million media blitz to persuade South African blacks to take part in the October 26 election of segregated town councils. Animals were chosen in the belief that blacks would relate to them better than to human figures, which inescapably display racial characteristics. Lions, elephants, mice and dogs were passed over in favor of the cuddly, industrious squirrels. "Our studies showed this animal was kosher," an official of the South African Bureau of Information explained.

The vote was a referendum—with the regime setting the ground rules—on whether black South Africans would accept Botha's reform of the apartheid system. It was also the centerpiece of a counterinsurgency strategy that seeks to crush black activism while co-opting a sizable bloc of black votes by pouring money into the townships. The operation is called WHAM—for Winning Hearts and Minds. In the last municipal elections, in 1983, only 21 percent of eligible blacks turned out. The government blamed poor voter education and intimidation by black radicals. Nut and But were the response to the first problem. For the second, the government used a variety of tactics: banning antiapartheid organizations, making it a crime to advocate a boycott and staging the ballot over a two-week "prior vote" period to undermine boycott efforts.

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But the strategy fell flat. Talking squirrels proved no match for those who worked to make the boycott stick: church leaders and community groups; the street committees that directed the uprising in the townships from 1984 to 1986; and the grass-roots network of the country's largest black trade union organization, Cosatu. In the end, the black turnout was only a fraction higher than it was in 1983.

The box in which the ruling National Party is trapped has now shrunk considerably. The reform component of its grand design for blacks is in tatters. Quite as alarming to Botha is the ominous advance of the intransigent Conservative Party, which took two-thirds of the seats in the Transvaal heartland with its millenarian appeals to those fearful of a government surrender to the black hordes.

In a fatuous appeal on the eve of the election, Foreign Minister Pik Botha pleaded, "It is time to unite . . . there is no time for acrimonious exchanges and divisions." In the morning-after hangover, which way would the regime turn to shore up its support? Would it free the ailing Nelson Mandela? Or would it crack down further on dissent? The answer was swift and depressing—a monthlong closing of the country's best-known opposition newspaper, the liberal *Weekly Mail*, which suggests that South Africa can now look forward to more of apartheid's harshest instincts.

GEORGE BLACK

UNCIVIL LIBERTIES.

CALVIN TRILLIN

I think this would be the proper time to acknowledge any mistakes I've made in my coverage of the 1988 presidential campaign. I do not include outright lies in this category. It's my hope that making a regular custom of correcting errors sometime around the end of a campaign will serve as an example for my fellow columnists—except, of course, for those who have registered with the appropriate Federal authorities as infallible.

I want to thank all of you for your letters pointing out mistakes or taking issue with some of my conclusions—although I'd like to say to Mrs. D.B., of Canton, Ohio, that honest people should be able to disagree without the use of such words as "dingbat" and "airhead." As for the general criticism that I ought to be ashamed of myself for making a living by writing snide, underhanded and generally unfair remarks about my betters, I still can't think of much to say in my defense except that it's not much of a living.

I should also point out, more or less in my defense, that some of the things I've said over the past year or so about the campaign and the candidates were not meant to be taken as absolutely factual. In that category, I would include a couple of statements in my coverage of the Iowa primary, when the presidential campaign often sounded like a contest among people vying for an appointment as extension agent of the South-Central Agricultural Planning District. I would like to say in the most direct way possible that Michael Dukakis was never under the impression that you have to kill a cow to get the cheese. George Bush never said that the life of dairy farmers is particularly hard because they're often required to milk right through the cocktail hour.

Those were meant as little jokes. The same is true of the historical footnote in one column concerning the 1980 primaries, when I briefly considered taking a shot at the nomination myself. I did not actually lodge a complaint with the Fair Campaign Practices Committee—a group that I can only assume must have disbanded in despair once the current campaign got under way—accusing Governor John Connally of "unfair hair."

For those of you whose letters indicate that you took the little jokes absolutely seriously, this might be a good moment to point out that whenever you notice me using some phrase like "there was a rumor that" or "it was said that," you should probably become alert to the possibility of a little joke to follow. Yes, I realize that it would be a lot less complicated simply to label little jokes. But it would also be a lot less underhanded, and I have my reputation to think of. For those of you whose letters indicate that you see nothing at all strange about the proposition that you have to kill a cow to get the cheese, all I can say is that you ought to think about getting out a little more.

In an area in which I tried to be absolutely factual, the origins of the Pledge of Allegiance, I want to acknowledge that I was incorrect in saying that the Pledge—which first appeared in 1892, in a magazine called *Youth's Companion*—was written for the purposes of circulation promotion. According to Professor John Baer of Anne Arundel Community College in Maryland, who was kind enough to send me a summary of a speech he delivered on this subject, the magazine had a premiums department that sold, among other items, American flags—then not often seen in American classrooms. James Upham, the man in charge of the premiums department, realized that if there was a Pledge of Allegiance to the flag, every classroom would need a flag to pledge allegiance to. Because it was this stroke of American enterprise that resulted in our having a Pledge of Allegiance, I should apologize, as should many of my colleagues, for implying that George Bush's visit to a flag factory was a piece of smarmy jingoism. Under the circumstances, it was a historically appropriate piece of smarmy jingoism.

I hardly know what to say about your response to the campaign slogan I composed in an effort to counter criticism that I had nothing good to say about Senator Dan Quayle: "Vote for Dan Quayle—Definitely Not the Dumbest Guy in the Deke House." Unless and until Senator Quayle releases his college record, I don't see how so many people can be so certain I was factually incorrect about that—even Mr. R.R.M., of Indianapolis, whose letter said, "I ought to know because I finished a close second." Finally, I should say that Mr. R.R.M. is a little joke, as is Senator Quayle.

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BELTWAY BANDITS.

DAVID CORN AND JEFFERSON MORLEY

■ What's Wrong With the Democrats, Part I

A self-defeating attitude usually becomes self-fulfilling. Last month, when the Rev. Jesse Jackson addressed the Democratic Congressional Caucus, Paul Kirk, chair of the Democratic National Committee, made some introductory remarks. Mr. Democrat congratulated the assembly for doing such a fine job this year, reports a loyalist who was in the audience, and then went on to say that one of the greatest accomplishments of the Congressional Democrats was to "produce the least-damaging party platform ever." "Was that our intent?" asks the loyalist. "To produce a least-damaging platform? Why bother at all?"

■ Post-Mortem in the South

Already thinking about 1992? Look at Dukakis's electoral performance in six Southern swing states: Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Alabama, South Carolina and Mississippi. If black voter turnout increases while white turnout stays the same, a Democratic nominee can win these states' fifty-six electoral votes with as little as 30 percent of the white vote. The strategic choice: either mobilize the party's black base in a way that also appeals to whites, or appeal first to white Reagan Democrats and hope the black vote remains Democratic.

Despite declining Democratic loyalty among black voters, Michael Dukakis chose the latter strategy. "We've seen less involvement in local voter turnout efforts from the presidential campaigns than in 1984," said Sonia Jarvis, executive director of the nonpartisan National Coalition on Black Voter Participation. As for 1992 prospects, Jarvis says, "The Republicans have the opportunity to make a serious appeal to blacks. Democrats have to ask, Can they continue to ignore black voters in favor of a possible or even problematic bloc of white voters?"

One indicator of the depth of discontent among black voters is a recent poll conducted by the Joint Center for Political Studies and Gallup. Despite the fact that Jackson has rejected the idea, 42 percent of blacks surveyed said that "a black leader like Jesse Jackson" should run as an independent presidential candidate in 1992.

■ What's Wrong With the Democrats, Part II

The National Economic Commission, the brainchild of Governor Mario Cuomo, was established by a Democratic Congress last year and assigned the task of producing a bipartisan deficit-reduction plan. Presumably the rough-and-tumble of democracy was insufficient to achieve the same end. Instead, the issue is to be left to twelve individuals picked mostly from the right and center by Reagan and Congressional leaders. They will release a report in December that is expected to shape the budget deliberations of the next Administration and Congress. The study is supposed to transcend party politics, and the N.E.C. maintains that its members are split equally between Democrats and Republicans. But the claim is accurate only if Lee Iacocca, the Chrysler boss named to the commission by Democratic Senator Robert Byrd, is considered a Democrat. There's no reason to believe he is. A spokesman for Iacocca says, "He never said he is currently a Democrat. Back in his early days he was a Republican. When he needed to go to Jimmy Carter for loan guarantees [for Chrysler] he was a Democrat. Now he says he is a pragmatist." If go-with-the-flow Iacocca leans right, the Republicans have the edge.

Moreover, the new President will appoint two members to the commission, which should create a definite ideological majority. "It's silly to think the new members won't push for what the next President wants," says one N.E.C. staff aide. Bush appointees presumably would back his pledge to cut the capital gains tax. This could easily lead to a split and conflicting majority and minority reports. Thus a Democratic initiative—prompted by the Democrats' unwillingness to devise and sell to the public an effective and fair deficit-reduction proposal of their own—could end up providing cover for Republican economic policies.

■ Holiday for Fascists

George Bush received some—but not enough—flak for his campaign's contact with anti-Jewish and fascist Eastern European émigrés. A 1972 diplomatic memorandum sent to us by John Loftus, a former attorney in the Justice Department's Nazi-hunting office, shows just how far Bush and the G.O.P. have gone in courting such rogues.

That year the government of Australia asked the State Department for advice on handling Croatian extremists in its country. In response Richard Johnson, deputy director of the State Department's Office of East European Affairs, outlined U.S. policy. As described in an Australian Embassy memo, Johnson had noted that even though Croatian extremists posed a problem for U.S.-Yugoslav relations, "the East European emigre vote was important to several municipal, state and federal office-bearers. Accordingly, the Administration needed to exercise care in its handling of extremist groups."

Despite his desire to win ethnic votes, Nixon saw the peril in collaborating with the stridently anti-Communist Croatians. His Administration, the memo says, was trying to "chip away" at "Croatian extremist strength" by educating key U.S. public officials about the "aims and methods of extremist Croatian organizations." In 1971 and 1972, the memo reports, the Administration sent a letter to officials in areas with strong Croatian communities warning them not to associate "with gatherings arranged by Croatian emigres to commemorate the establishment of the German puppet state of Croatia" in 1941.

The Reagan-Bush Grand Old Party—so eager to embrace anti-Communists—has displayed less restraint. In 1984 it published a "Guide to Nationality Observances" that noted April 10 as Croatian Independence Day. The G.O.P. called for celebrating the 1941 proclamation of the "Independent State of Croatia," which, in the calendar's delicate phrasing, was "forced . . . into an unfortunate association with the Axis powers." Even Nixon knew better.

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

Pas Devant

A friend of mine remarked to me a couple of weeks ago that like almost all journalists in the United States I'd forgotten the *intifada*. It stung me, since my desk is piled high with reports from Palestinian organizations, clips from the Hebrew-language press compiled by Israel Shahak, testimony from visitors to the region, a remarkable essay by Norman Finkelstein that could find no publisher, Noam Chomsky's eyewitness accounts in *Zeta*, special issues of *Middle East Report*, *Revue d'Études Palestiniennes* and *Covert Action Information Bulletin*. Move an inch out of the rut of the mainstream press, which has exiled the subject to the back pages if it covers it at all, and any information one might wish to have about the breadth and tenacity of the Palestinian uprising and the horrors of the Israeli repression is available. Yet my friend was right. There could have been more columns. But how many would one need? Here's the first of two, with data supplied in part by my colleague Karima Bennoune.

Start with the election campaign in the United States. By its conclusion the conduct of America's major client state and the matter of Palestinian rights had disappeared entirely from public debate. George Bush has vehemently opposed the idea of a Palestinian state. The Republican Party platform even went so far as demurely to encourage the notion of transfer (that is, expulsion of Palestinians from Israel and the territories) with the words, "More jobs and more opportunities in adjoining countries might draw the energies of more young people into building a world for themselves rather than destroying someone else's."

Dukakis took as his adviser on Middle East affairs and human rights the pro-Israeli lobbyist Hyman Bookbinder, opposed a return to pre-1967 borders and said the U.S. Embassy should move to Jerusalem. Neither candidate was challenged by the press for ladling out boilerplate about P.L.O. intransigence. Neither was pressed to justify U.S. funding for a state that every day defies international law and fundamental human rights. Israel's election results promise to augment those abuses, particularly deportation.

Once Jesse Jackson was bullied into submission in the New York primary, agreeing that he would not negotiate with Arafat, the issue ceased to be regarded as a fit topic for mainstream discussion. Nor was there a word in either presidential debate about one of the conflicts in the world most likely to lead to a superpower confrontation or nuclear war. Meanwhile, the *intifada* signaled a decisive break with the character of twenty-one years of occupation. Under the uprising's impulse it is possible, Edward Said tells me, that in Algeria in mid-November the Palestine National Council will promulgate in broad terms a declaration of sovereignty, perhaps with an annex recognizing the principle of partition and coexistence of two states.

Numbers of Hate, Grammar of Racism

From the beginning of the uprising to October 30, Israel killed 409 Palestinians in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, and inside the Green Line. (Over the same period Palestinians killed six Israeli Jews there.) The Database Project on Palestinian Human Rights reports that 239 Palestinian homes were destroyed between December 9, 1987, and October 9, 1988; thirty-three people have been expelled and twenty-seven await expulsion. Thousands have sustained crippling injuries from shootings, beatings, tear gas, injections, live burials and torture administered by soldiers or settlers. (There is not a single physical therapy center in the West Bank or Gaza, so handicapped persons have a slim chance of rehabilitation.) One of these, 17-year-old Mohammed Abu-Aker, popular and active in the Deheishe refugee camp, was shot in the stomach when he walked outside his house on a quiet day in August. The bullet, fired by a soldier from a rooftop, shattered his insides, and a second bullet just missed his head. Gangrene later precipitated the removal of virtually his entire intestine.*

Since the *intifada* began, 18,000 people have been imprisoned, the majority without trial or charge. In the Ansar III concentration camp in the Negev desert, where soldiers opened fire August 16 killing two men, many prisoners are seriously ill. They are made to sit in the hot sun and have barely enough water to survive. Over the past twenty-one years, according to Samih Farsoun in the September issue of *The Return*, 400,000 Palestinians have been arrested, one-third of the occupied population.

Faisal Husseini, head of the Arab Studies Society in East Jerusalem and author of a Palestinian declaration of independence, was arrested on July 31 and placed in six months' administrative detention under an order from Rabin. The organization was shut down for one year and its offices were sealed. This after Husseini appeared at a Peace Now forum in Jerusalem. Only a month earlier he had been released from nine months of administrative detention. Who is silencing Palestinian "moderates"?

In late September the army sharply increased its habitual gunfire, killing seven people and wounding 100 in a two-day period alone. "The rioters are suffering more casualties," Rabin said. "That is precisely our aim." By one Israeli poll, 41 percent of Israelis support a "transfer" from the occupied territories. Meanwhile, in the town of Ramallah the army's policy of beating has created a kind of wailing wall. It runs alongside a vacant lot near the center of town, and is covered with blood.

The Israeli mentality sponsoring such torments is often described as confused or frightened or neurotic or any of a further dozen words used to describe a psychological condition. But to be forthright about it, a word one cannot avoid is "racist." The evidence seeps from report after report. Take Israeli journalist Tom Segev's account, in *Ha'aretz* for January 8, of what happened when an Arab lawyer sug-

*Mohammed, alive in the face of medical predictions that in September had friends printing 1,500 posters for his funeral, is in Boston awaiting the world's first successful intestinal transplant operation. Americans who paid for the bullet can now help pay for the operation—to the Mohammed Abu-Aker Fund, c/o the Naim Foundation, 2812 Connecticut Avenue N.W., Suite 3, Washington, DC 20008.

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gested that he walk with him through Jerusalem to get a taste of the humiliations Palestinians have daily to endure. As cited by Chomsky in the July/August issue of *Zeta*:

> He was stopped repeatedly by Border Guards to check his identification papers. One ordered him: "Come here, jump." Laughing, he dropped the papers on the road and ordered the lawyer to pick them up. "These people will do whatever you tell them to do," the Border Guards explained to Segev: "If I tell him to jump, he will jump. Run, he will run. Take your clothes off, he will take them off. If I tell him to kiss the wall he will kiss it. If I tell him to crawl on the road, won't he crawl? . . . Everything. Tell him to curse his mother and he will curse her too." They are "not human beings." The Guards then searched the lawyer, slapped him, and ordered him to remove his shoes, warning that they could order him to remove his clothes as well. "My Arab," Segev continues, "kept silent and sat down on the ground" as the Border Guards laughed, saying again "Really, not humans," then walked away. "People were passing by and didn't look at the Arab, as if he were transparent. 'Here you have your story,' said my Arab."

Punishing a People

If one was also forthright about it, the policies of the Israeli government would be described not as brutal or strongarm or by any such euphemism, but simply as fascist, or at least pre-fascist. This has become increasingly clear as the *intifada* has gone on, and the phenomenon is expressed in a number of ways: in Israel's law; in its use of force; and in the explanations of its apologists.

Over the past few months, coincident with the high point of the U.S. election campaign and also with the run-up to the Israeli election, the government passed a number of laws intended, as Joel Brinkley wrote in *The New York Times*, "to get the uprising, which is entering its 11th month, finally under control." Essentially they allow the army to use collective punishment to break the spirit of the Palestinians. This has always been a tactic, as when the air force bombed villages in south Lebanon because Israeli soldiers had been killed there, or when the army blew up houses in Beita after Tirza Porat was killed by a Jewish settler, but it has taken on a more insidious form.

Now parents can be legally fined or jailed for failing to keep their kids from participating in the uprising. Teachers can be jailed for conducting underground classes for children whose schools are closed. In the town of Qalqilya, among others, the army has held the entire village in house arrest for days while it seeks "suspects." The popular committees have been banned and several of their leaders arrested. Offices of professional associations have been shut down, as has the largest charitable society in the West Bank. Brinkley quotes Maj. Gen. Amram Mitzna ("a frank, sometimes self-critical man") as saying "Terror organizations don't allow anyone to be innocent civilians." I suppose that explains the introduction of plastic bullets and the change in official policy that allows soldiers to fire them into a crowd for whatever reason. As of October 12 the death toll for the preceding two weeks was about 40 percent higher than the previous ten months' average.

In an interview with Brinkley, Ephraim Sneh, the military governor of the West Bank until a year ago, said, "The most important thing to realize is that the *intifada* has very broad popular support. Our confrontation is with the entire Palestinian population, and that is why punishment is necessarily collective measures."

Such collective punishment expresses a deeper current of Israeli motivation. In the Summer 1988 issue of *Covert Action*, Israel Shahak describes a little-known event that he says was a major reason the *intifada* began:

> From June to August 1987, a period during which the occupied territories were quiet—completely quiet—there were a series of pogroms against Palestinians in Israel itself. By "pogroms" I mean exactly the common use of the word. In a given neighborhood, usually quite a big neighborhood, all of a sudden all the flats or houses or rooms rented by Arabs were vandalized and burned. The Arabs were beaten and expelled from the neighborhoods. I mean all Arabs—both from the Palestinian territories and Israeli Arabs. The police did not give any protection, and the neighborhoods became free of Arabs. The Hebrew press at that time invented, or re-invented, using Hebrew characters, a German word, *Arabrein*, which means in German, "clean of Arabs," from the German word employed by the Nazis, *Judenrein*, "clean of Jews."

The recent expansion of legalized brutality is very important here. In Chile, for instance, various laws have been created especially for the benefit of military personnel involved in abuses of human rights. Some of these laws are secret, unknown even to lawyers. According to the head of the Chilean Bar Association the antiterrorist law allows someone to be designated a "helper" of terrorism, and charged, detained and tried on that basis, in a way that is so broad it would be declared unconstitutional almost anywhere else. The junta has been particularly successful at codifying its criminal actions. Most people say this is due to the Chileans' exceptional penchant for legalism. I think, instead, it is in the nature of fascism. Hitler, after all, constructed a whole edifice of law with which to oppress the Jews. Few people will deny that the corruption of the Chilean judicial process—with the numerous killings, disappearances, detentions, expulsions and tortures, and with the military's infiltration into every aspect of life—is fascistic. In fact it's not odd for people to consider Pinochet a fascist. Yet signposts of the same kind of approach in Israel are not called fascist.

Why not? Part of the answer, at least with regard to commentary on Israel in this country, is that mainstream coverage is itself mostly imbued with a reflexive racism so pervasive that one ends up taking it as a normal feature of the landscape. And this brings me to the most recent commentary of Thomas Friedman of *The New York Times*, a man laden with prizes (and matching self-esteem) for his reporting from Israel. (*To be continued*)

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ARTICLES.

THE LIMITS OF ZEAL

Khomeini and Postwar Iran

MANSOUR FARHANG

Every revolution seems to produce its own "Trotskyists"—those who feel destined to export their revolution abroad before building the promised land at home. But so far, the "Trotskyists" of all national and ideological varieties have failed in their mission. The Iranian revolution is the latest case in point. In 1979 the unexpected collapse of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlevi's regime and the fragmentation of secular forces in Iran enabled the country's Shiite fundamentalist clerics to monopolize state power. Almost at once the cry went up from a minority of mullahs to spread the message to the Arab world. Iraq was the obvious first target: It shares a 700-mile border with Iran and nearly half of its people are Shiite Moslems. Unlike his militant followers, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini did not at first favor the use of military means to pursue his ends. The success of the unarmed mass movement against the Shah persuaded him that propagation of the faith and material assistance to the Shiite communities in the region could do the job.

But Khomeini's reluctance to take up arms against the Iraqi rulers did not last very long, thanks to President Saddam Hussein. For the Iraqi invasion of Iran on September 22, 1980, which was expected to overthrow the Ayatollah and promote Saddam Hussein as the strongman of the Persian Gulf, provoked a rapid mobilization and expansion of the Islamic Republic's armed forces, and consequently provided the Shiite "Trotskyists" with an unexpected opportunity to pursue their agenda in the name of defending Islam and Iran. By June 1982, when Iran had gained the upper hand in the war, the expansionist mullahs were in such complete control in Teheran that no one within the regime dared to question the wisdom of seeking the conquest of Iraq. The collapse of the Pahlevi monarchy, the expulsion of Iraqi troops from Iran, the effective suppression of secular forces at home and President Jimmy Carter's apparent helplessness in the hostage crisis (as well as his defeat by Ronald Reagan, for which Iran's ruling clerics claim credit) mesmerized Khomeini and his lieutenants. They came to believe that there was no limit to what their religious zeal could achieve.

This state of mind was best summed up in the slogan of the Revolutionary Guards: "The road to Jerusalem goes through Karbala" (Shiism's holiest shrine, located in southern Iraq). The task of exporting the revolution remained the all-encompassing feature of Iran's foreign and domestic policies until July 18 of this year, when Khomeini astonished the world (including all but two or three of his associates) by accepting U.N. Security Council Resolution 598, which called for a cease-fire and negotiation in the Iran-Iraq war. Only days earlier, Prime Minister Mir Hussein Musavi and Interior Minister Ali-Akbar Mohtashemi had publicly condemned any diplomatic solution to the war as an insult to Islam and its warriors. After all, for nearly eight years, "War, war till victory" had been the Islamic Republic's most sacred slogan.

The guns fells silent in the end because both sides were exhausted, morally and economically, and because the Reagan Administration, in a reversal of its policy during the first seven years of the war, saw more benefit in ending the conflict than in fueling it. So long as the war was confined to Iran and Iraq, the United States did virtually nothing either to curtail arms shipments to the belligerents or to try bringing them to the negotiating table. Only when the fighting threatened to engulf U.S. Arab allies and interfere with commercial navigation in the Persian Gulf did Washington support the call for a cease-fire.

Of course, U.S. pressure and the hopeless stalemate could not by themselves have changed Khomeini's mind. The Ayatollah grudgingly accepted the cease-fire because his favorite lieutenant, Ali-Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, and Khomeini's son, Ahmad, a key behind-the-scenes player since the beginning of the revolution, managed to convince him that the continuation of the war could bring about the collapse of their rule. A million dead, 2 million wounded, hundreds of billions of dollars in material destruction and the immense suffering of the people could not move the 88-year-old spiritual leader of the Islamic Republic. But a threat to the survival of his regime was altogether a different matter.

Khomeini's decision was a fatal blow to his "Trotskyist" followers, who are now very unlikely ever to regain the influence they enjoyed from 1982 to 1987. Their adventurism was doomed to fail because it was motivated by an illusory view of the world. Even if Iran had conquered Baghdad, it would have been confronted with the armies of Syria, Jordan, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, as well as with various forces contending for power within Iraq. For Iraq's neighbors could not possibly tolerate Baghdad becoming an outpost of Teheran. Nor could the superpowers and their allies, who rushed to Iraq's aid when it seemed to be losing the war in 1986 and 1987. The Ayatollah used to tell his followers repeatedly that lack of resources and international isolation could not hinder their cause, because God was on their side. Yet he proved to be more sensitive to reality than many of his critics had thought.

Over the past ten years the U.S. mainstream press has so thoroughly portrayed Khomeini as a mindless fanatic that even many seasoned observers fail to see his shrewdness as a political actor. Whereas fanatical leaders usually adhere to

Mansour Farhang, professor of politics at Bennington College, is co-author, with William A. Dorman, of The U.S. Press and Iran: Foreign Policy and the Journalism of Deference *(University of California Press).*

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their words and tend to use power to further their ideological goals, Khomeini has repeatedly changed his words for pragmatic reasons, exhibiting an uncanny ability to bend his beliefs in order to protect or expand his power. For example, when announcing his acceptance of Security Council Resolution 598, he said: "Dear and noble people of Iran! You know I had made a covenant with you to fight to the last drop of blood, to the last breath. But today's decision was only in recognition of our interest, only in the hope of God's mercy and satisfaction. I take back whatever I had said. I have traded with God whatever good name I might have had." Before this dramatic change of heart, many Iranians were put in prison for urging a settlement of the conflict.

Even the Ayatollah's initial hostility toward the "Great Satan" was largely motivated by his correct assessment that America was more useful to him as an enemy than as a friend. Now that this view no longer serves the foreign or domestic purposes of the Islamic Republic, the Ayatollah's men have begun to pave the way for normalizing U.S.-Iran relations. In September, for example, a number of prominent American academic experts on Iran were invited to Teheran to address an international conference on "aggression and defense." The event was organized by the Islamic Republic's Office of War Publicity. According to both eyewitness and press accounts, there was virtually no anti-American rhetoric in the proceedings and the treatment of the U.S. guests was more than friendly.

Another significant conciliatory gesture toward Washington was an editorial in the semiofficial daily *Ettelaat*, which argued that Iran "must negotiate directly with the U.S." even if this leads to "the establishment of official political relations" between the two countries. Not too long ago the same newspaper, whose publisher was appointed by Khomeini, used to accuse Iranians who espoused similar views of having hostile intentions toward the regime. Some were arrested and tortured for daring to express such a position in public. Now it seems certain that steps toward normalizing relations between Teheran and Washington will follow the U.S. presidential election, particularly if George Bush is the winner. Iran's relations with France, Canada and Britain have already been restored.

Khomeini's success as a manager of power in his native context emanates from his skill at neutralizing his opponents and maintaining a functioning balance among his quarrelsome lieutenants. He is a master at alternating between crusading and pragmatic positions whenever he sees advantage in the shift. He sees no advantage, however, in accommodating his domestic critics, no matter how temperate their criticism or how solid their revolutionary credentials. He is a holy man who is quite fond of using the sword. He seems to be plagued with a sense of morbidity. His acceptance of a cease-fire with Iraq is the only joyous news he has given his people since assuming power. It was entirely characteristic of Khomeini to liken his approval of the U.N. resolution to swallowing poison. Yet his decision demonstrated that he also knows when to submit. After all, he is not the only national leader to have dragged God into war; nor was he the first to leave the fighting to Him when shortages of weapons, money and men became critical.

Yet it was ultimately Khomeini's ignorant and inchoate view of the world that directed Iran's revolutionary energy and spirit toward the delusion of grandeur. He tried to reduce the ideals of the Iranian revolution to a desire to fight the war. In the words of Mahmud Dowlatabadi, Iran's foremost novelist, under Khomeini's guidance, "The word 'war' became sanctified. The revolution, we were told, would flower in war."

The problem with the Ayatollah as a national leader, in addition to his dictatorial tendencies, is that he pays little attention to economic issues and sees no value in the ways of the modern world. He believes the best way to govern the country is to generate a continual sense of excitement and self-sacrifice among the poor and the uneducated. Thus, he has been hesitant to support reforms that would expand social welfare or reduce economic inequality. He seems to believe that such efforts could undermine both the zeal of his followers and the moral authority of his regime. Even when accepting the cease-fire, he reiterated that the pursuit of material welfare and the requirements of revolutionary struggle cannot be reconciled. Then he warned: "Only the downtrodden, those who have tasted misery and deprivation, will remain with us until the end."

Khomeini's glorification of deprivation is a direct rebuttal to certain of his associates who believe the Islamic Republic has an obligation to show compassion for the poor by improving their material well-being. Long before the Ayatollah agreed to the U.N. cease-fire call, many technocrats within Iran's government had come to realize that war expenditures, the lack of credit for importing goods and the sharp decline in oil revenues had made economic development impossible. As *The New York Times* reported from

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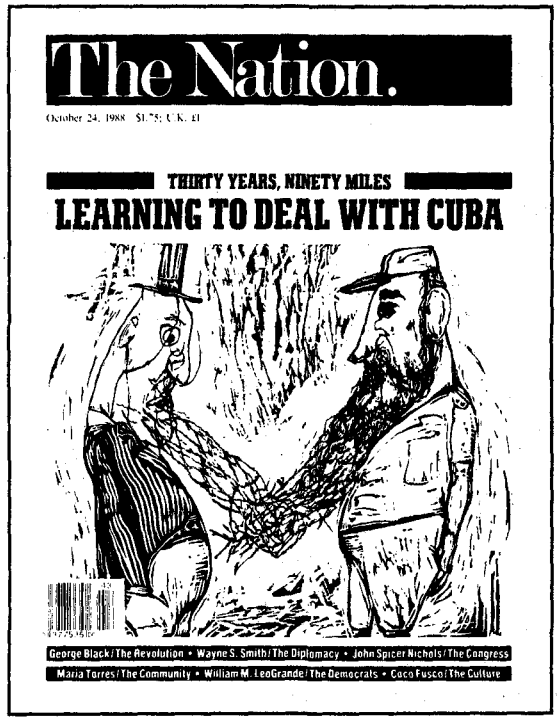
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Teheran in early July, "A growing number of senior Iranian officials are warning that an acute economic crisis combined with burdens of the war with Iraq are endangering the Iranian revolution." While Khomeini was justifying the war in the name of God, war profiteers were accumulating gold. No leader has ever done more to enrich international arms dealers. On the domestic front, a tiny group of manufacturers, contractors, middlemen and black marketeers, all with close ties to influential mullahs, reaped massive profits while inflation, shortages and unemployment were making life increasingly harsh for the vast majority of Iranians.

The war made it possible for Khomeini to deny his support to any of the various elements proposing a clear economic strategy for the Islamic Republic. For below the Ayatollah in the regime's political hierarchy are many who understand the modern world and are concerned about the chaos and indecisiveness that plague the nation's economy. But they are so divided on questions of ends and means that they simply cannot reach common ground. The regime's competing leftists, rightists and centrists are all reactionary on political and social issues. But the economic leftists, represented by Prime Minister Musavi, favor land redistribution to peasants and nationalization of foreign trade and major manufacturing firms, while the Guardianship Council, the official bastion of economic rightists, has so far rejected all efforts to impose limits on private ownership of land or capital. (The Council is empowered to veto any legislation it judges to be in violation of Islamic laws.) Others, chief among them the Speaker of the Majlis, Hashemi Rafsanjani, seem to prefer a pragmatic mix of economic policies.

At present these differences revolve around strategies for postwar economic reconstruction. The leftists advocate self-reliance and minimal foreign participation, while the rightists favor inviting in Western and Japanese corporations, who stand to reap a bonanza in profits from rebuilding destroyed factories, refineries, ports and cities. (Japan's Institute of Middle Eastern Economies estimates the cost of basic reconstruction at $8.2 billion for Iraq and $25.9 billion for Iran.) Centrists like Rafsanjani and President Ali Khamenei advocate a middle ground and try to marginalize their leftist and rightist rivals.

Disagreements among Iran's ruling mullahs were overshadowed by the war and Khomeini's antipathy toward social welfare issues and conventional diplomacy. Now that the truce is holding, however, the regime will have no choice but to address the expectations and frustrations of Iranian society—even if, in the short run, relief at the end of the war may delay the inevitable questions about the abominable lack of freedom and economic equity in the Islamic Republic. Men like Speaker Rafsanjani, President Khamenei and Prime Minister Musavi are quite aware of the coming challenge, but personal political rivalries and factionalism prevent them from devising a common strategy to meet it. And as long as Khomeini survives, their differences are bound to remain, since the Ayatollah is unlikely to change his vague and evasive attitude toward the country's socio-economic problems.

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Over the years Khomeini has made so many contradictory statements about issues of social justice that the advocates of widely varying positions can quote him to support their arguments. Once Khomeini told a group of visitors, "The callosity on the peasant's palm is the real deed of the land." The advocates of land reform interpreted this remark as a *fatva*, or religious judgment, and concluded that those who work on the land are its legitimate owners. The next day some jurists asked the Ayatollah to explain what he meant by the statement. Khomeini seemed surprised by the inquiry and said he had nothing specific in mind. Then he advised the jurists to follow Islamic laws in determining property ownership. Needless to say, the laws of Islam make no reference to the "callosity on the peasant's palm" as an adequate substitute for the deed of trust.

At the moment all elements within Iran's clerical leadership are faced with two delicate problems: the future of the U.N.-sponsored negotiations with Iraq and the post-Khomeini transition. On the first count, they recognize that progress will, at best, be slow and incremental. A host of complex issues remain to be resolved, including the disputed sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab waterway, the return of prisoners of war and the support by each side of its enemy's exiled dissidents.

A rather coherent mechanism is in place to name an Islamic jurist (a *faqih*), or a council of them, to succeed Khomeini. But the problem here defies procedural agreements. For the man with the most power and political acumen below Khomeini, Speaker of the Majlis Rafsanjani, is not a *faqih*, and thus lacks the necessary qualification to succeed him. The man who is qualified, Grand Ayatollah Hussein-Ali Montazeri, is a powerless simpleton who has never been taken seriously by either Khomeini or his principal lieutenants. The reason he has been designated as Khomeini's formal successor is that, of the five or six living Grand Ayatollahs within Iran's Shiite hierarchy, he is the only one with revolutionary credentials and unquestioning faith in Khomeini's idea of Islamic government.

Within the regime, Rafsanjani has some potent enemies, but Khomeini has appointed him commander in chief of the armed forces, thereby strengthening his already considerable political influence over the Revolutionary Guard commanders, who are destined to play a decisive role in the post-Khomeini power struggle. If Rafsanjani wants to become Iran's maximum leader after Khomeini's death, he will have to use violence to eliminate his competitors, and in the process redefine the basic tenets of the Iranian theocracy in order to legitimize his personal rule. On the other hand, if the various contenders for power are willing to accept collective leadership, they may be able to avoid violent purges within the regime. Bringing about a negotiated and shared leadership would allow them to claim credit for a unique achievement in Iranian political history.

The apparent end of Iran's international renegade status does not signal the emergence of a more accommodating political order at home. The Iran-Iraq war, perhaps

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more than any other major twentieth-century conflict, was fought between two regimes acting against the overwhelming preference of their respective nations. Now that the nightmare is over, both governments have unleashed their coercive machines to punish those demanding to know the reasons for eight years of fratricide. The Iraqi government's use of poison gas against the Kurds is also a warning to all Iraqis who oppose Saddam Hussein's brutal rule.

In Iran, meanwhile, just days before Khomeini's acceptance of the cease-fire, Revolutionary Guards broke up a meeting of the Freedom Movement led by Mehdi Bazargan, revolutionary Iran's first Prime Minister, and arrested eight people for favoring a negotiated settlement of the war. The men are still in prison, even though the position they advocated has now become official policy. Since mid-August scores of dissidents have been hung in public and hundreds more arrested throughout the country. Iran's Supreme Judicial Council has asked the revolutionary courts and prosecutors "to act decisively against the blasphemous and atheist grouplets" and to punish them "in the harshest manner." The Iranian authorities do not want people to ask questions. As Rafsanjani put it, "We should not ask why and how, not create more problems for society." □

'THE MOST IMPORTANT ART'

Movies in the Soviet Union

KAREN ROSENBERG

The main character in the Soviet film *Repentance* is a Georgian mayor who resembles Stalin in his external calm, inner paranoia and ruthlessness toward those who contradict him. His son symbolizes the Brezhnev-era tendency to justify repression and silence dissenters: A woman who denounces the small-town dictator is found insane and hospitalized. "After showings in every city, people got up and applauded the blank screen," the movie's director, Tenghiz Abuladze, told me in Moscow not long ago. "It was the first swallow of *perestroika*."

Lenin called cinema "the most important art," and the administration of Mikhail Gorbachev has mobilized the power of the movies in its campaign to restructure Soviet society. The decision to release *Repentance* in 1986, two years after its completion, was reportedly made at the Politburo level. And in May 1986, some say with the sanction of Alexander Yakovlev, then the Central Committee member responsible for culture, the Soviet Filmmakers Union became the first artistic association to vote out its old leadership and pump in more liberal blood. The filmmakers had been frustrated for a long time, as the 160 or so feature-length movies released each year by Soviet studios numbingly indicated. Made under the watchful eye of the Moscow office of Goskino, the country's central film agency, they were too often formulaic and predictable.

As one result film attendance fell drastically. In 1975 a Moscow Film Studio production drew some 18 million moviegoers; a decade later the total was down by half. In the same period, average attendance at films made by the Leningrad Film Studio dropped from 14 million to 6.3 million; by the Ukrainian Dovzhenko Film Studio, from 11.2 million to 5.3 million.

And yet, as Soviet cinema lost much of its appeal as mass entertainment, a few Soviet directors such as Andrei Tarkovsky captured the imagination of the intelligentsia. In the Russian tradition, artists are supposed to be martyrs who sacrifice themselves for truth, and those filmmakers who suffered at the hands of the Goskino censors enhanced their reputations accordingly. Now, in the Gorbachev era, many of these same *auteurs* are expected to provide not merely entertainment but moral guidance about the meaning of *glasnost*.

Repentance was only the most famous "unshelved" title that broke taboos about the Stalin era. Alexei German's *Trial on the Road*, finished in 1971 and released in 1986, accords sympathetic treatment to a former prisoner of war and Nazi collaborator who wants to return to his homeland. (Under Stalin, such men were considered traitors and often sent to the gulag, and only a few Soviet intellectuals had questioned that judgment publicly.) Another German film, *My Friend Ivan Lapshin*, finished in the early 1980s and released in 1985, is a portrait of a Stalin-era believer who is beginning to have doubts. "I wanted to understand why people like my parents were applauding Stalin," German told the *Los Angeles Times*. Although to many in the West this film may seem a timid picture of the cruelty of Stalin's police, it nonetheless raised the hackles of Soviet conservatives because it challenged their idealized image of the building of socialism in the 1930s.

Other previously shelved films created a stir because they touch on Jewish life, a theme with a troubled history in the Soviet Union. According to some directors, Goskino would sometimes approve a scenario at a liberal moment and block the completed picture during a freeze in political life. Alexander Askoldov's *Commissar*, finished in 1967, is a romantic tale of a Red Army heroine that offers a sympathetic portrait of a Jewish family in the Ukraine, but it was deemed unacceptable after the Six-Day War. Last March, at the San Francisco Film Festival, Askoldov recalled, "[Alexei] Romanov, the former head of Goskino, invited me for a confidential chat and, patting my knee, said, 'I have two suggestions for how you can save your artistic career: One, cut the part where the Jews are chased into the gas chambers, and two, let's figure out how to change the Jewish family into a family of some other nationality.'" Askoldov refused, and the film wasn't screened in public until the 1987 Moscow Film Festival, when the Filmmakers Union agreed to the director's impassioned public demand that it be shown. When Gleb Panfilov's 1979 drama *The Theme*, about an aging, blocked hack writer, was finally released in

Karen Rosenberg's articles on Soviet culture have appeared in periodicals in the United States, Britain and Japan.

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1986, it attracted attention because of its discussion of Jewish emigration. Although the writer/*refusenik* is only a minor figure in the final version, his strong desire to leave his homeland was an unusual sentiment to see expressed in Soviet art.

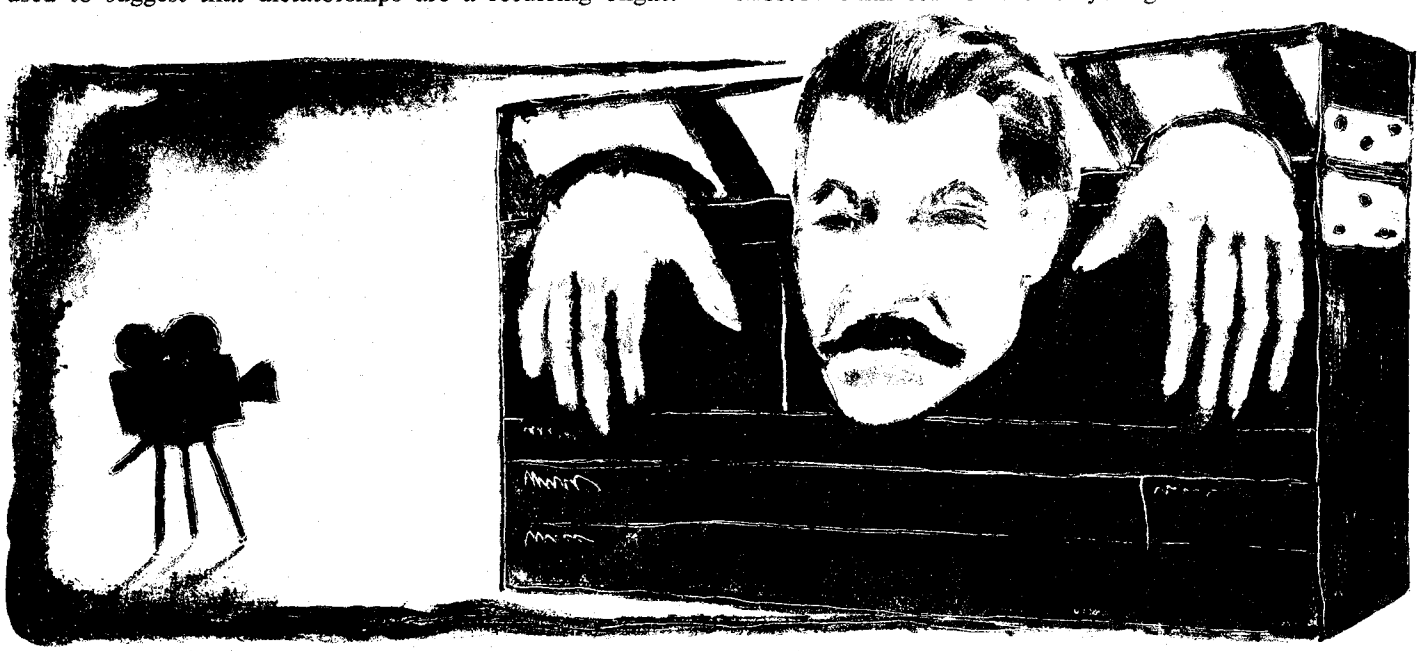
Of course, what is shown in these films is neither new nor original to the Soviet intelligentsia, which has dissected its society over the dinner table for years. Nevertheless, any narrowing of the tremendous gap between public and private discourse was greeted as significant in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev-era documentaries like *More Light*, which shows archival shots of Trotsky and calls for more and better research into early Soviet history, and *Risk*, which offers a view of Khrushchev more positive than the usual, still leave a lot unsaid. But in a country long dominated by clichés and rituals, every deviation from orthodoxy carries value.

So readers also took note when long and laudatory obituaries of émigré film director Tarkovsky were published in the Soviet press after his death in 1986 and when retrospectives of his films were presented in 1987 at a meeting of the Filmmakers Union and at the Moscow Film Festival. Because of his poetic, associative, unusual style, as well as his celebration of religious faith, this filmmaker had been controversial in the Soviet Union since the mid-1960s. Tarkovsky wrangled with Goskino censors for years and was refused permission to shoot a film abroad. In 1984 he sought political asylum in the West. The posthumous acceptance of a defector as a Russian artist and the screening of his works made in the West caused a sensation in the Soviet Union.

Film professionals (*kinoshniki* in Russian slang) and urban intellectuals I talked to last winter follow the big changes in their cinema so closely that one might think all Russians share their excitement. But Igor Lissakovsky, vice president of the Filmmakers Union, told me then that while 3 million out of the 8 million Muscovites saw *Repentance*, that proportion did not hold elsewhere in the country. Some young people may simply be uninterested in the theme of Stalinism, but other moviegoers were probably scared away by Abuladze's demanding style, in which anachronisms are used to suggest that dictatorships are a recurring blight. Years of censorship hadn't allowed audiences much practice in deciphering visually complex works. When difficult films weren't shelved as "formalist" they were often printed in small quantities and shown in only a few urban theaters at inconvenient times or at small film clubs attended chiefly by movie buffs. Since most theaters offered films no better than what was on television, Soviet moviegoers tended to stay home. Per capita attendance dropped from eighteen visits a year in 1976 to fifteen a year in 1982. When Russians did go out, they preferred American adventures, Indian musicals and Arab melodramas to home grown, politically correct fare.

According to a metaphor used by some Soviet directors, the easiest way to get this audience back into the theaters would be to turn filmmakers into waiters who give customers what they want. Indeed, the restructuring of the film industry is making consumer orientation a real possibility. By next year, each Soviet studio must try to support itself with revenues from pictures it produces, so making a few unprofitable movies could create financial crises. For that reason, directors who lack a track record of popular movies may not get work—and that may mean those who make demanding artistic films as well as those who make dull ones. Goskino no longer holds veto power over scripts and films. The right to approve a scenario or a completed movie has shifted to the individual studios, but if they reject a project as too risky at the box office, that's censorship too, of a sort all too familiar in the West.

Glasnost has widened the possibilities for screenplays, but the ethos of "what's hot and what's not" may narrow them down. "In the film archives, everybody is sitting and looking at clips about Stalin, Stalin, Stalin," Georgian director Irakli Kvirikadze told me. "They're no longer interested in anything else. Before, the very same people were all praising Brezhnev, Brezhnev, Brezhnev." Other formerly forbidden themes seem to be in as well: Kvirikadze and director Georgi Daneliya are working on separate pictures about Georgian Jews who have emigrated, and two projects in the works at a Moscow Film Studio unit for young directors concern the



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Soviet urban netherworld, whose existence has been long ignored by the media.

One of those scenarios, written and directed by Alexei Rudakov, is set at the bottom of Moscow society, among people with only a temporary permit to work in the city. The other, scripted by Valery Barakin, concerns professional card players, an underground phenomenon in the Soviet Union. "If such a film had been allowed three years ago, then it would have had to include a statement pointing out that card playing is bad, and especially for money," Karen Shakhnazarov, who heads the young directors' unit, told me. If new Soviet films eschew "boy meets tractor" and other stereotypes of Socialist Realism, it may be because filmmakers and administrators like the 36-year-old Shakhnazarov have had access to Western movies at film school, through the Filmmakers Union and on videocassettes, which now circulate unofficially, as Western books and audio tapes have for years. Films by Bob Fosse, Robert Altman and Arthur Penn are among Shakhnazarov's favorites. And he added: "I think the American school of acting is now the best in the world."

One reason that some recent Soviet documentaries are attracting attention at international festivals is that they look more Western than was expected. In Juris Podnieks's 1986 *Is It Easy to Be Young?* no heavy voice-over interprets the words of a Soviet Hare Krishna celebrant, a punk rocker and a burned-out veteran of Afghanistan, who are interviewed about their nonconformist stances. Herz Frank's 1987 *The Highest Court* also explores a neglected part of Soviet society, filming a man on death row guilty of black marketeering, robbery and murder. There's even some investigative journalism now: *The Bells of Chernobyl*, made by Rolan Sergienko and Vladimir Sinelnikov in 1986, looks into who was responsible for the nuclear accident and for the delay in informing the surrounding populace.

Russians stood in line to see the punker in *Is It Easy to Be Young?* assert, "You made us the way we are—with your hypocrisy and lies." But despite its frank exposure of a generation's alienation, the documentary ends with a young man's opinion that no one takes young people seriously, which implies that the problem is just a failure to listen. The audience is invited to re-examine psychology rather than the defects of specific political and social institutions. There's a simple moral message behind *The Highest Court* as well: The interviewer's leading questions elicit orthodox responses from the prisoner, condemning his past desire for money and power and preaching gratitude to parents and society. And the final lines in *The Bells of Chernobyl* sound an uncontroversial warning against slackness among those who work with nuclear technology, not about atomic power itself. In the Brezhnev era, concluding a mildly controversial film with a happy ending was quite common. Now the heart of the film is often more provocative and the final section less optimistic, but the pattern of leading audiences out of the theater with hope in their hearts remains in some works. Because of such caution, films are rarely on the cutting edge of *glasnost*. Today, as in the thaw of the 1950s, periodicals are where the sharpest debates take place.

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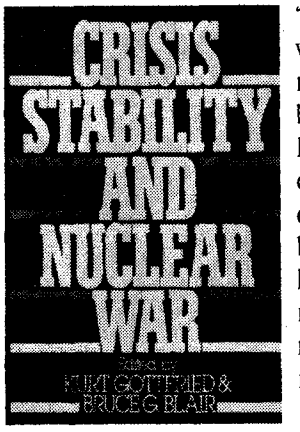

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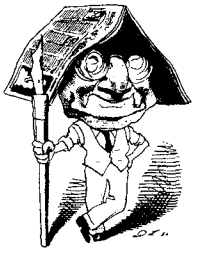

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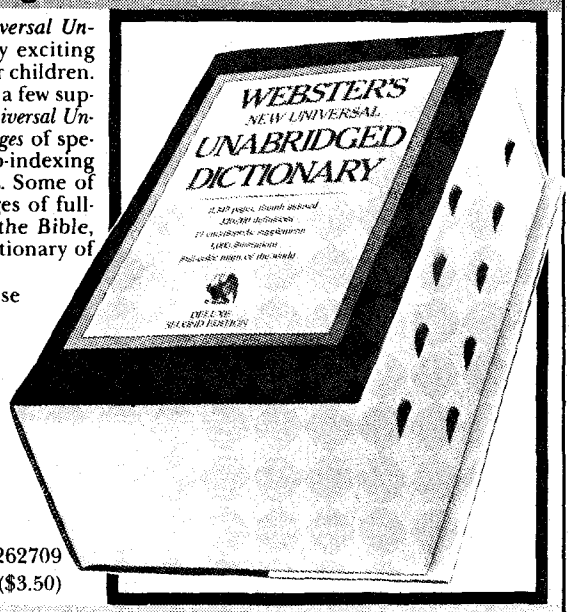

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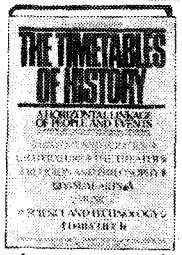

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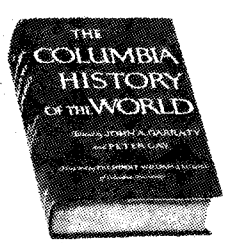

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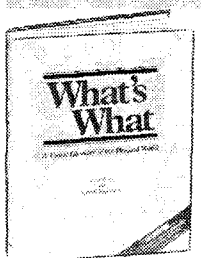

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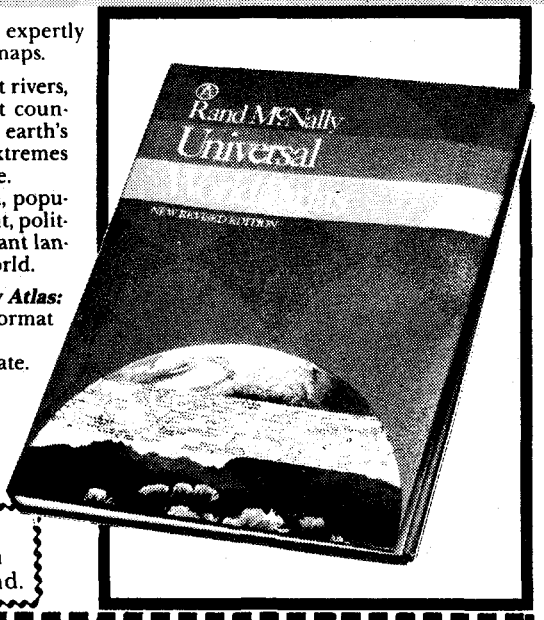

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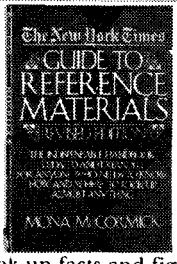

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One Soviet documentary that seemed politically oppositional turned out to be slightly ahead of official policy instead: in *Coming Home* (also titled in translation *Return*), by Sergei Bobrov and Tatyana Chubakova, one mother questions whether her son's military service in Afghanistan isn't an unnecessary experience. Last January, before the announced pullout of Soviet troops, Elem Klimov, then the head of the Filmmakers Union, told a group of visiting Americans in Moscow that this movie would prepare the public, though he didn't say for what. When Mark Gerzon of the American-Soviet Film Initiative in Malibu, California, asked him about the possibility of producing a pro–Afghanistan war film in the Soviet Union, Klimov replied that this would hardly be likely.

As for new fiction features, almost none have had the impact of *Repentance* or of German's formerly shelved works. "The bravery of forbidden films is still the main topic of conversation," Kvirikadze said at the San Francisco Film Festival. Since Soviet features take an average two and a half years to complete, the full bloom of the cinematic reforms isn't expected to show until 1989 or 1990. And it may take longer for some Soviet film professionals to recover from decades of severe censorship. A number of screenwriters and directors retreated to theater, dress design and other fields rather than submit to the homogenization of the movie industry. Many of them are probably lost to film, but one hopes that legendary talents—like Rustam Khandamov, whose directing career was cut short in the mid-1970s apparently because of his original visual style and lack of optimistic content—will work on movies once again.

Whether those filmmakers who compromised during the Brezhnev years can regain their artistic integrity is not clear. At Harvard University in March, Ukrainian director Yuri Ilyenko expressed more confidence in the younger generation that hasn't been bent into conformity. But Soviet film schools are said to contain many instructors whose teaching methods reflect and perpetuate the conventions of Brezhnev-era snoozers. Restructuring must take place in those schools if the general level of film is to improve. Perhaps under *perestroika*, Soviet cinema can produce, nurture and retain the likes of Andrei Tarkovsky. □

Fight

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

fielder Dave Winfield and sued him, claiming he gave her VD. These gals look like poison for jocks. Fight crowd thinks they're hoodooing Mike. Like they make him renegotiate his contract with manager Bill Cayton so they get a bigger piece of the action, call in deal artist Donald Trump. Robin was booed at Tyson-Spinks fight. Round to Tyson.

ROUND 2: Mike looking groggy. August: K.O.s Mitch (Blood) Green in early morning brawl in Harlem. No credit for fighting crime on the streets. Fractures one of his "hammerlike fists" (*People*). September: Runs Robin's BMW into a tree near Catskills training camp. New York tabs call it a suicide attempt. Robin all over TV, shooing reporters away as medics load Mike into ambulance. Little mother. Mike's a "walking time bomb," tabs say. Will be "the most unpopular champion in history," *Boxing Illustrated* predicts. Poor Robin. Rumors he beats her. See Leslie Bennetts in *Vanity Fair*: "'Michael doesn't hit,' Robin says. 'He throws things. He threw a lamp once, and a breakfast tray; milk and juice went everywhere.'" See *People*: "Tyson picks up a sugar bowl and flings it through a dining room window of the great neo-Tudor mansion." Cat hates breakfast. Robin's bodyguards (Robin's *bodyguards*?) call cops. Before this, Mike followed Robin to Moscow, wrecked furniture there too. No P.R. points for getting tough with Gorby. Shrink diagnoses Mike as a manic-depressive. Puts him on medication. Zonked Mike does a Baba Wawa with Robin. (*People*: "A picture of controlled fury in the ring, Tyson seemed subdued during the interview he and Robin taped with Barbara Walters.") Robin confides to Baba that Mike's a certified manic-depressive. Round to Givens.

ROUND 3: Mike staggers out fighting. Sees another shrink, who says he's not a manic-depressive after all. Happier without women interfering with his career. Does Cayton sue Robin for alienation of affections? No. Mike goes to Cleveland to see Don King. Fight crowd says that's good: King's a ghetto guy too. Mike needs one of his own kind. Robin files for divorce in California so she can get half of Mike's circa $50 million fortune. Fight crowd says, Whadwetellya? Is she a golddigger or ain't she? David Letterman says somebody should rescue Mike from "those women." Fight crowd curses those "mean golddigging bitches" (*Village Voice*). Mike's lawyers say they'll prove Robin conned him into marriage, claiming she was pregnant. (How low can a chick go?) Baba Wawa subpoenas Robin for a second grilling. Robin cries. Round to Tyson.

ROUND 4: Robin drops divorce suit. Says she never wanted Mike's dough (only his body?). Her lawyer says she didn't drop suit because everybody hated her. She could have picked up a cool $10 mil in a settlement, and with that kind of money who needs to be popular? Mike inks four-year pact with Don King. Cayton sues King for alienation of affections. Every night, TV news programs interview a different Tyson or Givens relative. Why no medium to call up ghost of Cus d'Amato? All America relieved that Mike and Robin have broken up—greatest public mismatch since Tiny Tim and Miss Vicky. Sympathy swinging back to Robin. *Village Voice*'s "Jockbeat" says Mike is too a wife-abuser. Robin's a bitch, but that's no reason for the upsurge of woman-hating. Round to Givens. Fight called: a draw.

COMING SOON: Dukakis sues Bush for defamation on *Night Court*. Dan Quayle fights Willie Horton on Baba Wawa. Kitty D debates American flag industry spokesperson on *Morton Downey Jr.* Medium tries to raise ghost of dead California gray whale on David Letterman, gets Cus d'Amato instead. Wrong number. Pundit says twice as many people would watch these shows as will vote on November 8. □

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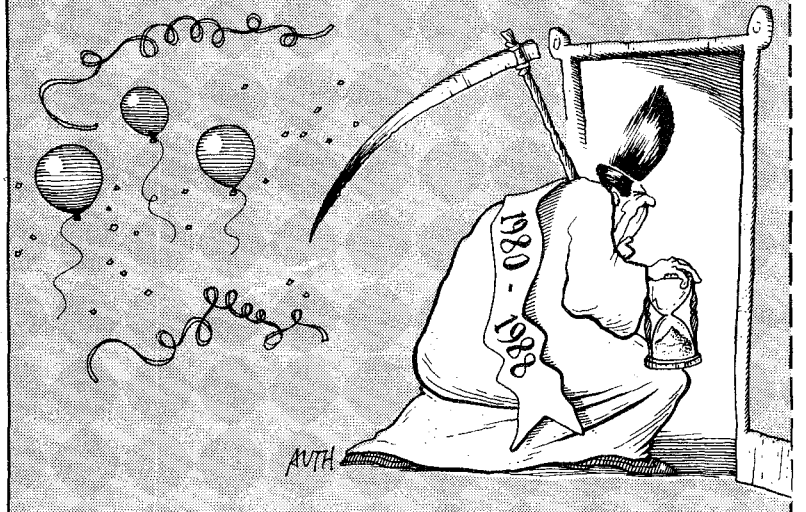
"Humbug!"



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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Sifting the Market Bull

DOUG HENWOOD

BLACK MONDAY: The Catastrophe of October 19, 1987 . . . and Beyond. *By Tim Metz. William Morrow. 264 pp. $17.95.*

In normal times, most citizens could care less what happens in the casino located at the corner of Broad and Wall Streets in downtown Manhattan. To such civilians, stock traders are little better than gamblers. But for several months after the crash last October, the casino was scrutinized with unusual care. How did it happen? What did it mean? Was the almost instantaneous disappearance of $1 trillion in equity values a fluke, a computer virus gone mad? Or was the economy about to follow the stock market down the drain? Sometime in the spring of 1988 these worries began to recede. The Federal Reserve opened the money spigots, keeping the credit system afloat; worries of bank failures quickly receded. A spate of reports blamed the crash on program trading—the computerized flinging about of billions of dollars under strategies that only a rocket scientist could devise, much less understand. Consumers celebrated Christmas in an appropriately mercenary fashion, and the Reagan boom continued on its complacent way.

For market professionals, worries that the economy might be too strong replaced fears of imminent collapse; inflation replaced deflation as the prime concern. Though Wall Street is in a terrible funk, the Texas economy is in the tank and the Third World is in worse shape than it was in the 1930s, George Bush's vision of endless prosperity passes without significant challenge from voters or pundits.

It's easy to forget how close we came to a financial Chernobyl. But as Tim Metz suggests in *Black Monday*, it was only the manipulation by the government and an inner circle of financiers that kept the market from going to zero and the banking system from entering gridlock. This book appears during this election year complacency to remind us. Metz, a twenty-one-year veteran reporter for *The Wall Street Journal*, has written a minute-by-minute, crisis-by-crisis account of Black Monday and its less well known cousin, Terrible Tuesday, when the U.S. banking system almost came crashing down with the Dow. It's a good opportunity to recall the anxieties of 1987, and to see if they deserve revival.

To tell the crash story, Metz focuses on several major players—notably, Gerald Corrigan, chief of the New York branch of the Federal Reserve; New York Stock Exchange chief John Phelan; a specialist on the floor of the exchange; a trader in the stock index futures pit in Chicago; and staff members of *The Wall Street Journal* who covered the disaster. Metz cuts from one player to the next, movie-style, to bring the fading melodrama back to life. It's a fine bit of reporting. Metz not only tells the crash story vividly, he also explains the mysteries of modern financial alchemy along the way. For those who find index arbitrage, puts and calls and the Federal Funds market only a little less mysterious than quantum physics or transubstantiation, *Black Monday* is an excellent primer.

Unfortunately, though, *Black Monday* fails to fulfill the "and Beyond" promise of its subtitle. The last words of the book come from the New York Stock Exchange's top P.R. official, Rich Torrenzano: "Nobody was thinking about tomorrow," he said, referring to October 21, 1987. His comment seems as accurate today as it did a year ago.

Most post-crash autopsies have neglected to examine the origins of the bull market itself. *Black Monday* is a refreshing exception to this rule. Metz takes us back to the early 1980s and the reign of former Federal Reserve chair Paul Volcker. Volcker's tightfistedness had brought inflation down from more than 13 percent in 1980 to 3.2 percent in 1983—but at a very high cost. Unemployment hit a postwar peak of 10.8 percent in late 1982, and a number of highly respectable analysts were afraid that the economy would continue sinking unless Volcker eased up. In the summer of 1982, with Mexico threatening to default on its debt and bring down the world financial system, Volcker finally did. The stock market, which loves falling interest rates as much as it hates rising rates, took the first steps of its five-year bull run.

Volckerism was no mere technical achievement; it was a political transformation accomplished by an unelected prince of money. Volcker's triumph over inflation was effected through an enormous shift in wealth and power to the creditor classes, a shift that laid the groundwork for the bull market. As Metz argues indirectly—he relies on William Greider's excellent book *Secrets of the Temple* to make the unexceptionable argument for him—"Volcker's successful fight against inflation vastly benefited the richest people on earth at the direct expense of American farmers, workers, and the poor."

Metz also details several other causes of the bull market. These include the first round of Reagan tax cuts, the enormous growth of pension fund assets since the mid-1970s, the universalization of individual retirement accounts, the de facto suspension of the antitrust laws and the development of "equity derivatives" like stock options and futures. Add all these ingredients together and you have a potent speculative mix. But this bull market bore little resemblance to those of the 1950s and 1960s, which were fueled by rising corporate profits and widening prosperity. The latest bull fed on surplus cash and promiscuous credit policies.

Both rich individuals and institutions found themselves with more cash and longer lines of credit than they knew what to do with. Since you can buy only so many Porsches, there was plenty of money left for financial speculation. Less wealthy individual investors were allowed to set aside $2,000 a year in I.R.A.s and get a tax deduction to boot; a good chunk of this money found its way into the stock market. Institutional investors were even more flush with cash and credit. Pension funds, with their $2.6 trillion in assets, got caught up in the speculative fever—all in the name of "investment," of course.

But pension fund money is real cash. No boom can get cooking without credit, and there was plenty of credit available. Not for farmers and small businesses, though. The privileged borrowers were the new breed of takeover artists who could tap the junk bond market and buy the stock of target companies with the proceeds. As a result of the merger binge, $275 billion in stock disappeared from the market between 1983 and 1987. In the current takeover bonanza, another $200 billion is likely to disappear. The

Doug Henwood is editor of Left Business Review.

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takeovers have a double-barreled effect on stock prices—they decrease the supply of available stock outstanding even as they increase demand for new stock investments by injecting fresh cash into the wallets of stock-oriented investors.

All these bizillions of dollars—over $1 trillion a day passes through the payments system of the New York Fed—couldn't be deployed using the limited resources of the human mind. So, institutional investors developed a variety of computerized strategies, like program trading and portfolio insurance, which eventually became the scapegoats for the subsequent crash. Again, Metz is far more honest than most commentators in pointing out that the bull market was propelled by the very same silicon strategists that were its eventual undoing. Blaming computers for the crash is like blaming an accidental nuclear war on missiles. Program trading was simply the form that speculation took for this generation. In the 1920s, speculation manifested itself in the form of highly leveraged pools and trusts, whose principal assets were often holdings of other pools and trusts. In both cases, the risks of such arrangements were conveniently forgotten.

Good reporting is a pleasure to read, but one wants more. Metz doesn't ask, much less answer, the question that nonfinanciers often ask: Why did all this money go into speculation rather than into the productive economy? The answer is obvious: There was simply too little profit in the latter. Evidence of this can be found in the profits earned by the five hundred blue-chip firms that make up the Standard and Poor's composite index, or S&P 500. (Though the Dow Jones industrial average has a higher recognition factor, the S&P 500 is Wall Street's favorite benchmark of stock prices; it is also one of the ingredients in the government's index of leading economic indicators.) At the peak of the bull market, in the summer of 1987, five years into the economic expansion, earnings on the S&P 500 were little higher than they were in 1981. After inflation, they were 24 percent lower than they were ten years earlier. Why go to all that trouble of building a factory or managing a business when it's so easy just to buy stock and let 'er rip? Why start a new business when there's plenty of credit available to buy an existing firm and strip its assets or resell it to another shark at a higher price a few months later?

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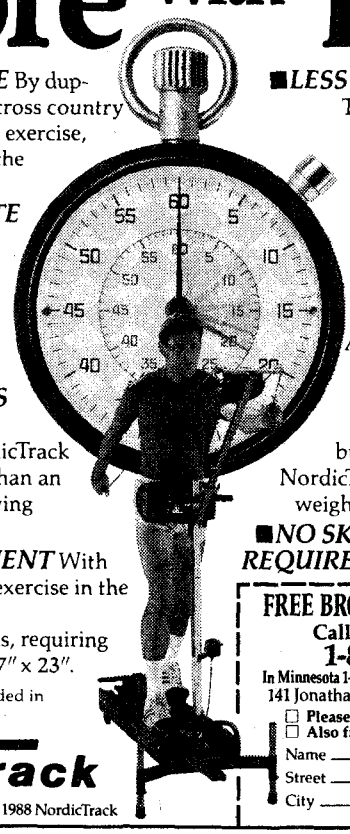

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THE PLEDGE
Howard Fast. Houghton Mifflin, $18.95.
Fast, whose many bestselling novels have made him an American institution, writes here of a situation with personal overtones. A left-wing activist during his youth, Fast denounced the Communist Party in the 1940s, but rather than testify before the witch-hunting HUAC, he served a jail term during the '50s. The protagonist of this novel is foreign correspondent Bruce Bacon. After covering WW II in Europe, he goes to India where he witnesses a horrible famine in Bengal—due, he is told by everyone, including the Communist journalist who shows him the horrors firsthand—to the British, who would rather see millions of Indians die than allow them to greet the Japanese as liberators. Back in the States, Bacon takes a leave of absence from the New York *Trib* to write a book about his experiences. Asked to speak to a group later identified as a Communist-front organization he meets feisty, articulate Moly Maguire, a writer for the *Daily Worker*, and falls in love with her, Nothing in Bruce's politically innocent, upper-middle-class WASP background has prepared him for Molly's "shanty Irish" world, or for the ordeal that awaits him as he is caught in the mounting anti-red-hysteria. Called before the HUAC, he is cited for contempt; he loses his job; his book is refused by publishers; eventualy he is sentenced to jail. And a further tragic irony awaits. Fast's narrative sense has never been stronger, the dialogue has verve and creditability, and red-haired Molly is one of his most memorable creations. Deftly, avoiding stridency, he captures the McCarthy-era atmosphere of suspicion and betrayal. More than compelling fiction, this engrossing novel carries a message of what can happen when democracy is subverted by demogogues.

—Publishers Weekly

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Metz also fails to ask: What does the crash portend for the real economy? Or, more broadly, does the stock market mean *anything* to the real economy? Metz is hardly alone in failing to take up this matter; economists and Wall Streeters rarely do either. That old warhorse of economics textbook authors, Paul Samuelson, describes the stock market as the "essence of capitalism," and then goes on for pages to explain "modern portfolio theory" and the "efficient market hypothesis." (M.P.T. is a highly mystified way of saying that investors look for rewards commensurate with perceived risk; the E.M.H. is an equally mystified way of saying that you can't beat the market, so why bother to try?) Even self-described Marxists like Juliet Schor say the stock market is of no relevance to the economy, a position not uncommon among academic economists of all stripes. I don't agree.

Though the economy keeps chugging along, apparently undeterred by the crash, I think there was a warning hidden in the panic of Black Monday: The real economy is vulnerable to an equally dramatic deflationary collapse. The worry here is debt—and you needn't be a Calvinist to be alarmed. Although the growth in the government's debt gets most of the press, the government can print more of its own money if it ever finds the debt service burden insupportable. Private debtors should be so lucky. In a phrase often used by credit market analyst James Grant, the United States is "capitalized for prosperity." All the debt accumulated throughout the 1980s is predicated on the assumption that incomes of firms and individuals will rise with sufficient vigor to cover the debt service. Hundreds of firms have issued junk bonds that require them to pay interest at rates well above their long-term profitability; countless individuals have committed themselves to onerous mortgages or home equity loans at floating interest rates, on the assumption that both house prices and their incomes will continue to rise indefinitely, enabling them to service the debt more comfortably at some indefinite time in the near future; the banking system is saddled with billions of dollars in questionable credit that would require an endless boom to keep it from going sour. Credit is a bet on the future by both borrower and lender.

A normal recession or a sharp spike in interest rates would be disastrous to all these optimists. Such disaster scenarios were in the back of nearly every mind on Black Monday. Every speculator had been hoping that he or she would get out just before the inevitable collapse, that there would be some "greater fool" who could be left holding the bag come doomsday. Needless to say, the market didn't accommodate them.

For a phenomenon allegedly detached from reality, the bull market was undone by some very real economic developments. Metz recounts all of them: a tighter credit policy imposed by the new Fed chair, Alan Greenspan; worries that the U.S. trade deficit wasn't shrinking; Congressional moves to undo tax breaks for corporate takeovers; rumors of war in the Persian Gulf; signs of tension between the governments of the United States and West Germany on matters of interest rates and currency policy. In other words, signs that the phony peace and prosperity of the Roaring Eighties were coming to an end, and that bills would soon have to be paid. In an environment where everyone tries to stay two steps ahead of everyone else, no one wanted to be the last to get out. Computers may have directed the liquidation, but there was plenty of old-fashioned panic to go around.

Last October, it seemed as if a rerun of the 1930s was just around the corner. Now, the financial markets and the Federal Reserve are worried that the economy is too strong, and that—horrors!—wage inflation may be upon us. The current consensus is that the crash was a mere "correction" of overvalued stock prices, the pricking of a speculative bubble, with no long-term economic impact. Metz's silence on the long-term implications of the crash probably reflects this consensus. But the consensus was wrong a year ago; the crash didn't push the real economy off a cliff. What if the consensus is equally wrong now?

In a report issued just after the crash, the consulting firm of Business International recounted the policy errors that led to the Great Depression:

> The final plunge into the depths of the depression from 1930 to 1933 was sparked in all three countries [the United States, Britain and Germany], but especially in the U.S., by an amazing combination of budget-balancing fiscal policy (which had no hope whatever of balancing the respective governments' budgets in the circumstances) and rising interest rates.

But such austerity is just what the financial and political elite expect of the new

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Administration. Maybe the stock market was saying something last October that we should listen to. *Black Monday* and all the other echoes of the crash circulating in this past anniversary month offer a second chance to heed the warning. □

Gray-Haired Youth

BRENDAN LEMON

GROUND ZERO. *By Andrew Holleran. William Morrow. 228 pp. $16.95.*

Judging from the war weariness pervading Andrew Holleran's collection of AIDS-related essays, *Ground Zero*, the 1960s were not the only decade in which a generation grew up old. For those affected by AIDS, the Reagan years have also had preternatural aging effects. In his chapter "The Names of Flowers," Holleran, a New Yorker now living primarily in Florida, drops in on a gay Manhattan party and, like Marcel visiting the Princesse de Guermantes in *Le Temps Retrouvé*, finds that much has changed: "A way of life that was once high-spirited, hilarious, is now restrained, solicitous (as if someone went from adolescence to late middle age without the intervening gradations)." Few better than Holleran have earned the right to make such a statement. His debut novel, *Dancer From the Dance*, captured in precise terms the emotional abandon of the 1970s disco-party scene. The follow-up, *Nights in Aruba*, chronicled the moment when conspicuous gay life devolved from discos to disease. Since 1981, Holleran has covered the epidemic for *Christopher Street* and other magazines, and those dispatches form the core of the new book. *Ground Zero* (the title refers to a nuclear bomb's area of greatest devastation) contains twenty-three chapters, on such disparate topics as promiscuity, housecleaning, the writer as witness, Charles Ludlam, metaphors, Santayana, Henry James and Caribbean beaches. Holleran's focus is the epidemic's effect on gay men, but he is not blind to its devastating impact on others—women, children, IV drug users, minority populations. Whatever his topic, Holleran's book draws less from its analysis of specific subjects than from its attention to a broad theme: the anatomy of perpetual mourning.

Holleran is a uniquely gifted personal essayist, but his work sometimes suggests other adepts. "Notes on Promiscuity" bows to Susan Sontag's "Notes on Camp" and Fran Lebowitz's "Notes on Trick," although Holleran's trawling for quips is more Lebowitz than Sontag: "The average person thinks other people have sex with him because he is good-looking, sexy, special, attractive. In a promiscuous world, however, we are picked up mostly because we are *breathing*." For all three authors, lists are thought ruins, remnants of a contemporary, largely homosexual scene. Images of urban collapse are especially evocative for Holleran. His occasional forays into Manhattan suggest an archeologist sifting through the detritus of a past life. He visits depopulated bars, baths and movie houses to collect the dreams he has deposited in them. It's a signature ploy: In his fiction, as well, he is drawn to places the crowd has left behind—a dorm room at graduation, a stadium postgame, a park after a rally.

Ground Zero's most sustained exercise in sorrow is "Cleaning My Bedroom," which recounts Holleran's attempt to inject order into his Manhattan apartment's disarray. Since his move to Florida, the New York residence has become a warehouse of 1970s memorabilia. Up on a visit, Holleran winnows what's unnecessary from these possessions. From a bedroom heap he discards items suggesting fantasy: pornographic magazines, a collage linking two nude men Holleran thought "belonged together." He opens a drawer: it's like opening a wound. He happens upon a "squash racket with a broken string; Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet*; Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*; an invitation to an exhibition of a [deceased] friend's architectural drawings . . . at a gallery in Southampton." For Frank O'Hara, these would be the makings of a poem; for Holleran, they are both mementos and scrap for the bin. Discarding personal effects is a standard sign of mourning; Holleran used a similar device to open his first novel. The housecleaning and the recording of it are strategies in the author's emotional recovery. Oddly, the loss of friends leads Holleran to few apocalyptic outcries. (Confronted with Paul Taylor's dance "Last Look," the decade's masterpiece of doom, he'd fix not on the final, sprawling *mass* of bodies but on the guy wriggling at the bottom of the heap—still breathing.) Facing catastrophe, he alights on what is quotidian, intimate, above all personal. He needs, continually, to air his memories. How else to grieve? Though homosexual in focus, Holleran's confessions are Augustinian: a mode of autobiography and reparation, an expression of joy.

And of fury. The opening chapter, "Reading and Writing," attacks the notion that AIDS has had beneficent repercussions within the gay community: that it has hastened maturity, instilled greater responsibility for behavior, been parent to wisdom. All of these Holleran greets with Firbankian scorn: "I wonder." He pours similar disgust on the idea that he has been spared illness to bear witness to the devastation, or to utter some consoling testimony. Such select deliverance, as Primo Levi insisted in a related, Holocaust context, is "monstrous." To compare the hosts of a virus with victims of a humanly engineered genocide seems even more obscene. Holleran thinks the analogy is lost on most gay men, who, he asserts, consider the government unhelpful but do not think it is "conspiring to murder them either, coldly and consciously, that is." (I wonder.)

Government indifference impels Holleran less to protest publicly than to change the focus of his work. He says that the only moral thing to write now is comedy, even though he feels his own store of wit often depleted. In "Tragic Drag," an appreciation of the genial actor Charles Ludlam, Holleran writes, "Not only is [Ludlam] gone, it seems, so is humor." The depressive mood has passed by the time he composes "My Last Trick," the story of a bar-prowling boy who was so horny his ass "squeaked"; and "Good Sex/Bad Sex," where he says that raunchy lovemaking "can be just what one needs," but that after lust has gone, "the heart still dreams of that miraculous marriage with another person you don't have to perform for. Love means: no auditions."

The epidemic has killed neither Holleran's *bel esprit* nor his acute lyrical sense. In one essay, he notices sandlot athletes "in their cotton shorts as they leap to recover the basketball after it bounces off the rim," and he decides, in a Stevensian summation, that "beauty does not lose its allure under the spell of grief." In another chapter, a member of a friend's chemotherapy group is remembered as "that gorgeous boy we used to

Brendan Lemon is on the editorial staff of The New Yorker.

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say had a Very Important Stomach—the one who plays baseball." In a third piece, Holleran considers a Bruce Weber–like photograph of a now-dead buddy, and realizes that "the longer I looked—at the silver-sharp sunlight, the wide beach, the distant and irrecoverable laughter—the more extraordinary he seemed: free, stylish, burnished by the sun; paragon of a way of life whose main sense of proportion had to do with muscle groups." Summer seaside scenes have a prominent place in homoerotic literature—oh, those boys on the beach!—and tellingly, the volume's closing chapter paints the AIDS decade with marine hues.

Holleran's interest in metaphors is not critical but poetic. The essay "Ties" describes an AIDS memorial service, with its awkward mingling of a gay man's family and friends and its ironic location. "The funeral home was only a block from the baths. . . . It seems wrong that the pleasure we shared should lead to death—it seems out of proportion to the crime; but, then, this is a medical, not a moral fact." After the ceremony, four of the mourners stop at an East Village cafe, sit around a table and exchange stories. Suddenly, one man "takes their four neckties and joins them at their tips over the tea and coffee cups in the center of the table." The conceit is not original; it echoes a James Schuyler poem that ends, "Steaming out silk ties, they bind." But in Holleran's hands the image is made new. Fresh, too, are the eponymous metaphors of "Stars." In that piece, Holleran takes a late-night walk through his small Florida town to look at the sky. Remembering the dead, he tells himself that "it is pure sentimentality to imagine friends who have disappeared as stars twinkling in the night sky above the earth—in fact they are just gone." He decides that "the real stars at this moment are the journalists, scientists, volunteers in New York and San Francisco, and wherever else, caring for the men determined to hang on to their human form. And the doctor who delivers us from this thing the brightest star of all."

Not surprisingly, given the extent of the plague's youthful casualties, *Ground Zero* brims with images of war. The Santayana section snaps the philosopher in 1944, riding in a jeep with an American serviceman and surveying a newly liberated Rome. "Cousin Henry" captures James after he has renounced novel-writing and is spending his last years in London visiting soldiers back from the Great War's front. The 1914 paradigm, specifically in its English form, is a magnet for AIDS writers. Both soldier-boys and AIDS sufferers have undergone strife after what seems, in retrospect, a period of exuberant estival frolic—in a verdant English countryside or on the beaches of Fire Island. "Never such innocence again," wrote Philip Larkin in his poem "MCMXIV," a sentiment affirmed implicitly by Holleran. Recalling an Arcadian past pours balm into psyches chafed by loss, and helps restore the memory of what has been relinquished.

Larkin's countryman Reginald Pound, in his book *The Lost Generation*, looked over the postwar English landscape and judged that "there was no estimating the extent to which creative thought was depleted, or the cost to learning, literature, and science of the destruction of so many strong and cultivated intelligences." Underlying Holleran's book is a like lament for the cultural potential snuffed out by AIDS, for the abortive labors of the latest lost generation. The "lost" designation helps account for the disorientation felt by those party to the hardship. World War I, T.E. Lawrence insisted in a letter to an acquaintance, was an "overwrought time, in which we had lost our normal footing." Holleran says that AIDS has produced "a deep depression—a depression that alternates between numbness and horror, fatigue and fear." At one point in "Reading and Writing," Holleran becomes so distraught that he forsakes art in favor of propaganda: Writing about AIDS "must be about fighting—it must be in some way heartening—it must improve morale, for it to be allowed a place of honor." To stiffen spirits, to purvey comfort: crucial goals for a successful campaign. And objectives attained by the essays in *Ground Zero*.

But the chief effect of Holleran's essays is not hortatory, it's tonic. In the final chapter, "Oceans," even the author seems restored. He leaves the battle zone behind and pops down with a buddy to the island of St. John. They luxuriate in the paradisal beauty of forest, sea and sky. They join a snorkeling expedition and admire the pluck of a fellow passenger, a woman over 70 who slides into the water in a wet suit. "Oh, to reach seventy," Holleran marvels, touching bliss at last. But the woman's sense of adventure, like almost everything these days, reminds him of a dead friend—an intrepid boy named Eddie,

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diagnosed by a dentist who noticed tumors on his gums—and Holleran cries, "What all the facts and all the accounts of AIDS have somehow failed to deal with is the suffering; and the lack of meaning."

Not exactly. Since the last of these pieces was written, in 1987, we have been inundated with AIDS-related poems, novels and memoirs, most of them tinged with meaning-laden woe. This literature is sometimes stimulating, often consoling. Holleran, however, remains the only writer whose attachment to the subject seems more than kiss-and-run. And to read his recent *Christopher Street* essays is to see his responses deepen. In "I Want to Take Off Your Glasses"—a closing phrase from one of John Cheever's letters to a boyfriend—he says he now feels not fear but "fervor" at reports of others making love. And in a review of *The Swimming Pool Library*, Alan Hollinghurst's well-wrought narrative of early 1980s gay London, Holleran praises the novel's "fluid, unapologetic" attitude toward carnality, and hints that such randiness may be making a comeback. It takes a veteran of *this* passionless decade to peer into the future and see—*O mores!*—the return of guilt-free sex. □

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Unreal Women, Foolish Choices

BRINA CAPLAN

THE TRUTH ABOUT LORIN JONES. *By Alison Lurie. Little, Brown. 328 pp. $18.95.*

If it were summer still, you could lie happily baking on a beach reading *The Truth About Lorin Jones.* What you need at the beach is a novel that will be busy while you are not, and Alison Lurie's eighth novel is an energetic, gossipy romantic comedy-cum-mystery, lively with incidents and revelations, sexual ambiguities and twists of fate. As long as your brain waves are cued to the slow, steady rhythm of the surf, it is likely to please. Any spiking of awareness, however, could lead to disappointment.

But if the sun is hot and the waves are smoothly sliding up the shore, you are likely to keep on turning those pages. What will tease you along is the assumption Lorin Jones's biographer begins with but abandons as she writes the life of this beautiful, eccentric painter. Initially, when museum curator Polly Alter looks at her subject, she sees a woman martyred by male exploiters—father, half brother, lover, gallery owners, collectors. Jones entered life as Laurie ("Lolly") Zimmern of White Plains, New York, married a philandering art critic, left him for an unreliable hippie poet and died in 1969, mysteriously isolated and alone, in Key West. In the intervals, she created a series of stunning semi-abstract paintings, whose titles teasingly suggest specific locales and landscapes without ever revealing their inspiration. Polly was responsible for the retrospective exhibit that brought Jones's work out of the shadows; now she wants to follow it up with a truth-telling biography.

The truth is not easily come by, though. There are paintings missing—who has them? And what do those evocative titles mean, *Deposition* or *Princess Elinore of the White Meadows*? Then there are the obscure events leading to her lonely death. Furthermore, what people tell Polly about Lorin Jones is contradictory. Judged by one account, she was crazy; another makes her seem conniving; in a third she appears to have been dispassionately generous. Seeing things truly, as Lorin once saw them, becomes an obsession for Polly. A would-be painter herself, she tries to look at the faces and scenery Lorin knew through Lorin's eyes—until she even finds herself momentarily aware of the dead artist's presence. Lorin Jones has become more vivid than anyone in Polly's own life.

In part that is because her own life is a mess. She lives in New York City amid the ruins of her marriage. Half the joint property followed her ex out West when she did not; so Polly's apartment lacks furniture, and there are frame stains on the walls where pictures once hung. As Polly works on Jones's biography, she worries whether her 12-year-old son will ever want to return from visiting his father and stepmother in Denver. Most friends from her married life hold Polly to blame for the marital breakup. Only her therapist and a lesbian friend, Jeanne, understand why she has chosen to be herself in New York rather than a wife in Denver. Who that self is exactly and what would ease her discontent hasn't become clear, though. At this point, Polly finds she is again single in a city where the only available males over thirty are "husbands and creeps." Her therapist's suggestion that eventually "she would be able to relate positively to men" is hardly reassuring:

> Polly wasn't counting on it. Even if she did meet a man who seemed possible, it wouldn't be any use. If she couldn't trust Jim, what man could be trusted? In the end no good had ever come to her from them, unless you count erotic pleasure. And Polly suspected now that erotic pleasure was the bait to a trap, a way to get the squirrel into the cage so that it—or rather, she—could spend the rest of her life running around a wire treadmill, breathless with love and fear.

Her husband's decampment has reminded Polly of the way her father repeatedly wooed and then discarded her when she was a child. It has left her doubting

Brina Caplan is a psychologist who lives in Boston and writes on literature and the arts.

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and angry, uncertain about her sexual orientation. Probably, she concludes at the end of a snuggly though not quite satisfying affair with her friend Jeanne, she belongs in a world peopled solely by women:

> Polly gazed at . . . herself as if in a film of the future. . . . She was sitting cross-legged in a circle of women at one of the study-group meetings she had up to now declined to attend. Her hair was chopped short, and she was wearing worn, woolly dark clothes and a serious, determined expression. Next to her on the lumpy braided rug made by a women's commune in Vermont were Jeanne and Betsy. On the other side, holding her hand in a warm possessive grip, was another vague sympathetic female presence: Polly's future lover, whoever she might turn out to be. ("I'm sure you'll find someone nice soon," Jeanne had said the other day, unconsciously echoing Polly's mother.)

Here, Polly's fantasy of earnest sisterhood is an object of fun—not Polly's fun, mind you, but her author's. Lurie is ever at work in *The Truth About Lorin Jones*, plumping up the situational whoopie cushions that will startle her characters in mid-gesture and render them comic. Marital relations were the area primed in two previous novels in which Lolly Zimmern or members of her family figured, *Only Children* and *The War Between the Tates*. Although there's ridicule enough to go around in *The Truth About Lorin Jones*, mostly it's women who sit down to that sudden surprise, then slip and bobble and look silly. Lurie has set particularly effective traps for Jeanne, whose gentle, feminine ways disguise a driving domestic imperialism. After she has become a roommate, no longer Polly's lover, Jeanne concocts an airy soufflé of feminist discourse about sharing, caring and need—all the while maneuvering to appropriate as much of Polly's apartment as possible for herself and her new live-in girlfriend. Eventually, the soufflé falls and takes with it Jeanne's claim to a finer moral standard. In fact, Polly concludes, in domestic matters, "Jeanne . . . treated her the way women were traditionally supposed to treat men: with charm and flattery and guile."

Given that Jeanne and her overly serious, natural-fiber-clad crew come off badly, there are going to be readers who will see this novel as an outright attack on militant feminism. But as you lie on the beach, you need not feel guilty for keeping your temper and your tan even. Think about it: In this novel, how much does it mean to be *liked* by Lurie? For instance, it's true that Lorin Jones's former boyfriend, the love interest, gets a more graceful body and better lines than Jeanne, but like all the other characters, Hugh Cameron (or "Mac") has no life of his own. He is there to serve the comic plot. Mac's assignment is to be the Technicolor wish-fulfillment that will counter Polly's drab, anger-and-resignation-inspired fantasies of lesbian sodality. What a hunk: sultry yet sensitive as hell, a poet *and* a carpenter. He rolls dramatically through scenes in the latter part of the novel like a turbocharged Errol Flynn. Although Polly's decision to allow a heterosexual rescue results in some deliciously steamy moments, you're hardly going to confuse any of these goings-on with choices a real woman might have to make. Are values at issue? If so, they're less political than comedic or theatrical—or, to be more precise, cinematic.

Much of this novel is cinema on the page. Lorin's story has the dramatic pull of those 1940s mysteries like *Rebecca* or *Laura*, in which a somewhat shlumpy protagonist, entranced by a mythically beautiful dead woman, goes about piecing together her less than seemly history. Here, just as in the movies, the title character appears only in others' recall. Where Hollywood relied on close-

Artemisia

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up shots of the present-day speaker dissolving into flashback, Lurie intersperses Polly's ongoing story with interview monologues, each speaker presenting a different episode in Lorin's life. Sometimes the technique wads the text with description. One of Lorin's childhood friends, for example, is supposed to utter the following mouthful: "I'd forgotten about all that, but there in the gallery—it was like the uneven pavement in Proust, you know—it all came back to me, from—my lord it must be fifty years ago. The hot nearly white summer sky, and how it felt to hold on to the rough speckled branches of the apple tree, and the hard shiny green apples, like sourballs." Sourballs, indeed. On the other hand, whenever the character interviewed is one of Lurie's feisty or cranky creations, the technique works, joining the present moment with Lorin Jones's past as seamlessly as any film director might wish.

Remember, though, that *The Truth About Lorin Jones* is ultimately not about Lorin Jones nor about truth—it's about laughs. Lurie has simplified the terms of reality so that pretensions bring pratfalls and sexual confusions resolve under the irresistible sway of love. No character gets treated in greater depth than the conventions of middlebrow comedy, say a Neil Simon screenplay, demand. And scenes filled with comic business are therefore the most vivid: Jeanne's managing to annex yet another bit of the apartment; Lorin Jones's ancient, egoist husband, complete with silk dressing gown, making his play for Polly; Polly's overtly resisting Mac, while their bodies, "like two good-looking oversexed morons, were speaking to each other . . . saying, over and over again: *—Hey, you want to?—Aw, sure.*"

Lurie's book teases us with novels unwritten. It might have put a strange, creative woman's life in deep perspective—beyond what a film can show. It might have looked into what makes the Jeannes of this world dedicatedly frilly and surreptitiously rapacious. It might have construed Polly's loneliness and sexual ambivalence as long-term problems, which, of course, they so often are for divorced women. Instead, Lurie has decided to have her fun and go home. For her, here, life is a beach. □

A WANDERING ISLAND

Once in the reservoir's lee reach there rode
like an exploded island where the ice
in pendant cones spoke on the ears of reed,
clicking and blazing in prismatic colors,
where moonlight funneled, ruminant and footless,
and the black water sang along the healed
edge of itself, whooping at the sun's touches,

a dead gull. It had lain upon the rim
of water like some frigate clenched in planes
of an Antarctic floe, buckled and im-
pacted, skysails floating in tattered pennons,
crushed by tectonic force, as if St. Brendan's
boat had foundered, slate shoulders old and lame
beneath their mantle of forgotten distance.

Rats gnawed a bloody flash into the breast.
The bleached beak with its clot of ravening
trembled and was still, quietus broadcast
in crumbs of gray down, bloated and drifting,
fledged into other motion, quills providing
hames to the wind's light touch, until the host
of sky wheeled, screamed loudly and sank, drawing

life out by the mouth where it had ridden days
across the desert face, where corruption
grew nacreous; and stitched their hunger's purpose
into landscape (moonlight, celesta's frozen
music in reeds) with lengths of filthy en-
trail yanked from knitted vanes of this new place;
and rose like shadows crossing over stone.

Karl Kirchwey

FILMS.

FREDRIC PAUL SMOLER

The Thin Blue Line

There aren't too many American filmmakers who exhibit the moral seriousness of Zola in pursuit of justice for Dreyfus while also veering off into the jokiness of David Byrne. But then Errol Morris, a man whose most tasteful and accessible work is a mordantly funny documentary on pet cemeteries, is a pretty unusual fellow, and *The Thin Blue Line* is a very odd film.

Originally, Morris had planned a documentary about psychiatrist Dr. James P. Grigson, (aka Dr. Death and Dr. Doom), a particularly repellent expert witness who has testified in 111 capital punishment cases over the past eighteen years, enabling the prosecution to secure 102 death sentences by insisting on the perfect sanity and eternal murderousness of practically anybody. In the course of research, Morris encountered the case of Randall Dale Adams, convicted of murdering Dallas police officer Robert Wood—one of Dr. Death's many wins. Fascinated by the case, Morris decided that Adams had almost certainly been framed by the police and prosecutors.

From very near the beginning of the case, the Dallas prosecutor knew that David Harris, a 16-year-old runaway, had stolen both the car officer Wood was shot from and the pistol with which he was killed. The prosecutor also knew that David Harris had later boasted about committing the murder. Adams's lawyers think that the prosecution ignored these facts because under Texas law Harris was too young to be electrocuted, and further believe that an undefeated prosecutor and a police department with a strong desire to execute somebody for the death of an officer concocted new evidence and persuaded Harris to become the prosecution's star witness.

Fredric Paul Smoler teaches history and political theory at Sarah Lawrence College.

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Harris was not immensely persuasive when put before a jury, and the film suggests that the prosecutor produced three last-minute perjured witnesses to clinch the case. *The Thin Blue Line* ends with an interview with Harris in which the filmmaker comes within a whisker of getting him to confess to the killing.

But *The Thin Blue Line* tells this story in a curious way. It's not just Morris's habit of editing out his interview questions, by now an ancient trick in documentary film, nor is it Philip Glass's brilliant and immensely effective score. The oddity lies in the film's highly stylized effects—brazenly campy, jokey effects, which seem deliberately inappropriate to the seriousness of the material and often deliberately enraging.

For instance: An affable Dallas homicide detective mentions a handgun, and a curiously old-fashioned black-and-white print of a revolver pops up, centered in the background of the frame. The print rotates toward the camera, briefly filling the screen, looking oddly like the illustrations from a turn of the century mail-order catalogue.

And later: The same detective mentions that moments before the shooting police rookie Teresa Turko had ordered a chocolate milkshake at a Burger King. In the next re-enactment of the murder, a pudgy actress in a police uniform hurls the milkshake from the patrol car window, and in slow motion the expanding column of liquid arcs out in a wave, the effect reminiscent of the soft-drink commercials conceived in the days when the high-tech look seemed spanking new.

Again and again, the murder is re-enacted, each take replete with slow-motion sequences. The camera lingers on many of the kitschy and irrelevant details mentioned in witnesses' testimony: popcorn in a movie theater, a sequence from an early 1950s television serial, long sequences from a pair of very bad drive-in movies. *Noir* elements are also present, but they more or less work; one's first response is that the extremely mannered visual style doesn't. The scornful, self-adoring specter of David Byrne's *True Stories* seems to hang in the air; the population of Dallas, particularly the police, judiciary and prosecution witnesses, appear sinister and oafish, partly because they wear dreadful clothes and smile too much. The film seems to conflate our aesthetic with our moral judgment.

Just what is going on here and why are these moments allowed to undermine the tone created by a number of key characters, beginning with Randall Adams? Adams has a remarkable dignity; he is an eerily calm man with flashes of cool humor, and a manner that seems to register the injustice and inhumanity he has encountered with a kind of quiet amazement; the lazy Midwestern twang of his voice is capable of irony without jeopardizing its ability to evoke the barbarousness of the situation. The flip style is similarly at war with the moral gravity of defense attorney Dennis White (who gave up trial work after Adams was sentenced to death, appalled by the spectacle of judicial murder), and with the unnerving demeanor of David Harris, who seems to have sent an innocent man to his death in a spirit of pique and opportunism. So when you leave the theater whipsawed by the campy, compulsively ironizing eye of the re-enactments and the moral seriousness of the rest of the project, you have to ask yourself what the hell is on Errol Morris's mind.

If you spend time watching television, you may have noticed an emerging aesthetic similar to that of *The Thin Blue Line*. Fox Broadcasting has put three oddities on TV recently: *A Current Affair*, famous for bringing us the Robert Chambers tapes, is the senior of these; *America's Most Wanted* is certainly the sleaziest; and *The Reporters* is the most recent, barely two months old.

Time, *The New York Times*, *USA Today* and a host of other publications don't much care for *America's Most Wanted*. The New York *Daily News*, by no means the most censorious organ in the United States, described the show as in "incredibly bad taste," and that pretty much characterizes the critical response. In general, Fox Broadcasting has been good at eliciting virtuous indignation from media critics whose disapproval is wasted on the viewing public, which has made *America's Most Wanted* the most successful program on Mr. Murdoch's new network. The show's format is simplicity itself: squalid and seemingly artless re-enactments of violent crimes, which culminate in a plea for information on the whereabouts of the featured fugitives. The Germans pioneered this idea, the British have imitated it and now Fox has its version.

A Current Affair is also much given to re-enactments, although it came to

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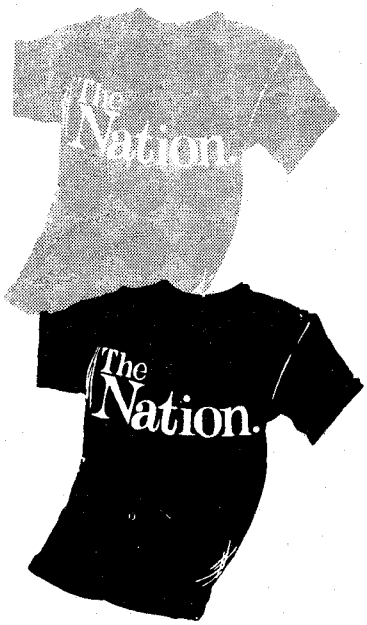

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most people's attention when it broadcast a videotape showing the less than contrite murderer of Jennifer Levin, Robert Chambers, pretending to strangle a doll and cavorting with some teen-age girls in their underwear. There was a certain vulgarity to the Fox edits, but under the circumstances this didn't deter the critics from watching and discussing it. People were willing to overlook the prurient fadeaway of a teen-age girl reaching to undo her bra, or the voice-over description of the murdered girl's bikini line, or the gratuitous references to "naked from the waist down" and "her breasts." Unlike the single-mother rape victim on *America's Most Wanted*, Levin was borderline P.L.U.—people like us—and material surrounding her murder excited a sympathetic interest among media critics.

Very few of *A Current Affair*'s stories arouse so keen an interest in those precincts. For the most part, the show's re-enactments concern people not like us, and moreover, all the Fox re-enactments look dumb. They're repetitive and much given to senseless slow-motion sequences in which the actors lope along with the fraudulent fluidity that by this point in the history of film evokes nothing save its own mannered falsity; they raise imitation murder weapons and fire them in molasses time, as muffled gunshot noises ring out and victims collapse like dying swans. The absurdity of such sequences is particularly noticeable after watching *The Thin Blue Line*, which cruelly exaggerates these mannered, balletic slayings in its re-enactment of the murder of officer Wood, goofily miming it again and again, with the policeman loping toward the car, the silvery gun filling the screen, the stately tempo of the sound effects man doing the gunshots and the actor flouncing onto the glowing asphalt. And as you watch a Fox tape unscroll, you begin to get an idea about what the hell is on Errol Morris's mind.

The Thin Blue Line reinvigorates the old and usually unpersuasive argument that mass culture diminishes our critical and moral judgment. Giving Fox Broadcasting's hackneyed visual tropes an extra quarter spin and juxtaposing them with the scenes of an innocent man doing life in a Texas jail powerfully suggests that the detritus of mass cultural criminology has helped land (and keep) Randall Adams in jail. The trial judge who confessed to wiping away an honest tear when the prosecutor blustered on about the thin blue line that stood between the jurors of Dallas and bloody anarchy seems to testify to the status of mass culture as ideology. *The Thin Blue Line*'s apparent snobbishness falls away when it suggests that we are all enmeshed in this culture, where a bit of Kipling's doggerel ("Thin red line of 'eroes") has fused with *Dragnet*, and the rubbish in our heads becomes compost to nourish lies. We have been taught the script and when we administer justice we are only casting the roles.

On August 27, one day after *The Thin Blue Line* premiered in New York, Fox Broadcasting's newest effort was aired for the second time. *The Reporters* opens with black-and-white footage of flying typewriter keys looking a lot like those of my mother's 1940s Royal. The camera probes down the deep arc of the keys into the cavity of the typewriter, the movement seeming in part a wonderfully dated vorticist poem to a machine, in part an exposure of some truth skulking down there, vainly seeking to hide from the fearless investigators in Mr. Murdoch's employ. This is Errol Morris's aesthetic without any intentionally campy effects.

The first segment of *The Reporters*' second show featured the case of Randall Dale Adams. It used the re-enactments from *The Thin Blue Line* without attribution, and briefly interviewed Errol Morris. A portentous Steve Dunleavy talked to the still-incarcerated Randall Adams and goes Errol Morris one better with David Harris. Although Harris has been convicted of a subsequent murder, he is still a smidgen coy about confessing to Wood's killing, but he now admits to being the only man in the car, holding the revolver and pulling the trigger five times. Stills from the film appear, and one of the re-enactments even includes the Glass score.

The relation of mass culture to the art that seeks to deconstruct it has become startlingly foreshortened; the snake swallows its own tail. But a lingering suspicion that *The Thin Blue Line* is too unstable a compound, its aesthetic too perilously close to disintegrating into its own subject matter, is quickly given the lie. Done straight, or at any rate as straight as Fox can manage it, Randall Adams's plight fails to stir anywhere near the same emotion that it aroused when Errol Morris seemed to risk trivializing it with an overly arresting bag of tricks. □

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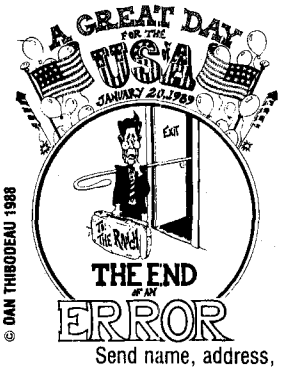

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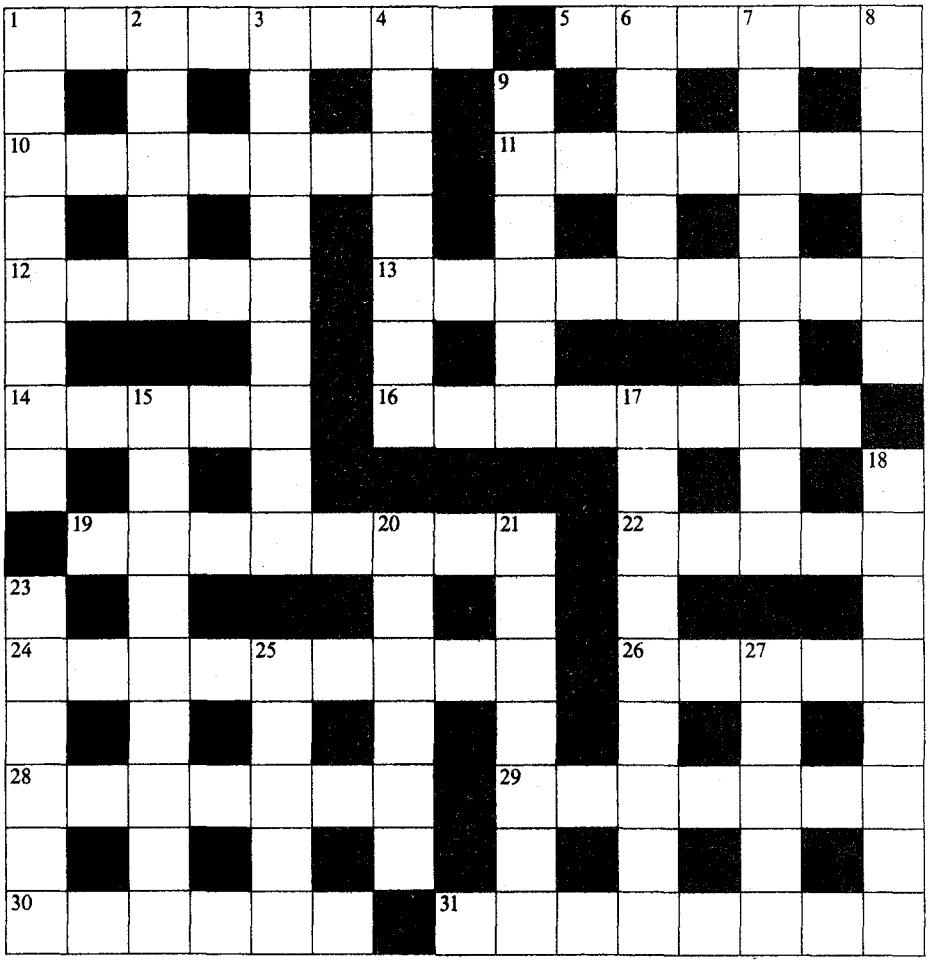
SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2217

■	A	I	D	E	S	■	■	D	E	C	A	M	P	
S	■	N	■	X	■	U	■	P	■	N	■	R	■	E
T	O	S	S	P	O	T	■	A	B	D	O	M	E	N
I	■	I	■	R	■	T	■	R	■	U	■	Y	■	N
L	O	D	G	E	M	E	N	T	■	P	L	A	C	E
L	■	E	■	S	■	R	■	I	■	■	■	N	■	D
■	A	R	T	S	A	N	D	C	R	A	F	T	S	■
■	■	■	■	E	■	O	■	I	■	N	■	■	■	■
■	S	T	U	D	E	N	T	P	R	I	N	C	E	■
W	■	R	■	■	■	S	■	A	■	M	■	O	■	A
A	V	A	S	T	■	E	S	T	R	A	N	G	E	D
T	■	D	■	A	■	N	■	I	■	L	■	N	■	D
E	N	I	G	M	A	S	■	O	F	F	B	A	S	E
R	■	N	■	P	■	E	■	N	■	A	■	T	■	R
S	I	G	N	A	L	■	■	S	T	E	E	P	■	

Crossword Puzzle No. 2218

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 See 19
5 and 10 The form of speech which Adolfo Calero used with Ortega—or is that an inconsistency? (13)
11 The center, I find, of intestinal trouble. (7)
12 The molding seems a lot of nothing, with 5 and 50 added. (5)
13 One's sales may prove a hang-up, but the real trade is different! (3,6)
14 The study of music? (5)
16 Textile fabrics and related merchandise make the contents of laundry good selling points. (3,5)
19 and 1 across What the entrepreneur may have with a sharp lookout. (2,3,3,8)
22 The classic writer of "Pigeon," for example. (5)
24 One hears that someone like Mame has a boyfriend—which should be caused to happen sooner! (9)
26 A lariat—particularly when all but the first part is looped. (5)
28 A subject for Coleridge long before Hemingway. (7)
29 A good deal of open space in the bone, and the skin may be taken off of such. (7)
30 Cigarettes and stockings might have been in the flapper era. (6)
31 When this is begun, old letters are torn up as a way to coerce someone. (8)

DOWN

1 Roles, perhaps, typified by one who sulks because the marbles are withheld. (3,5)
2 A small firm holding the bag for one in a famous case. (5)
3 Oil money's made in a very stinking way! (9)
4 and 25 This man might have been on the vaudeville stage, but monkey-business might be implied if you are given it routinely. (4,3,5)
6 and 17 Where you may put the glove you are holding, showing some indecision? (2,3,5,4)
7 If you find math droll, this is even funnier, though a form of servitude. (9)
8 We're in agreement with it—it doesn't plug in direct current! (6)
9 Where the choir changes, in a little way very surrounded. (6)
15 Possiby sharp, or even flat, but certainly not normal! (9)
17 See 6
18 What an intruder does to smash wrongdoing? (6,2)
20 and 23 What the young man on the prairies may be of America, when he's not quite ready to sow his oats? (7,6)
21 Taken of the voters in Russia—just like cattle? (3,4)
23 See 20
25 See 4
27 The particular view of one who arrived in Britain rather early? (5)

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

X-523

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